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Special Feature on Toy Magic Lanterns

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Here is Where the Boys Come In

Perhaps those most easily pleased with all manner of gifts are the young boys to whom everything is good, and yet occasionally one is puzzled to know what will appeal to the male individual between the ages of 10 and 18. Most boys like things that work or play, and yet the growing boy, while supposed to be utterly devoid of vanity, is sufficiently manlike to want the personal little things of the toilet and individual dress…. Besides all these things are military, brushes, gloves, boxing gloves, punching bag, skates, **magic lantern**, sled, steam engine, typewriter, printing press, carving outfit, pyrography outfit, watch, ring, iron working outfit, tool chest, work bench, books, to which a whole article might be devoted; rifle, hunting suit, football, football outfit, music box, electric engine, games, and pictures.

The Salt Lake Herald, December 4, 1904, p.24

This issue of the *Gazette* is somewhat longer than usual, but consists almost entirely of one long article that I wrote about toy magic lanterns. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, I spent the better part of a year doing research for the article, so I decided to publish the results in full. Second, nobody sent me any other articles for publication, so I had the space.

The article draws on a largely untapped resource for understanding the history of magic lanterns in the 19th and early 20th centuries—databases of online American newspapers from the early 19th century through about 1920. These fully searchable databases, many of which are freely available to the public and others through university library subscriptions, contain thousands of references to magic lanterns, including announcements of magic lantern shows in churches, schools, and lectures halls; articles describing magic lantern lectures; fictional pieces and poems referring to magic lanterns; and advertisements of magic lanterns for sale or exchange. In my article, I focus on advertisements for toy magic lanterns placed in newspapers by a variety of merchants, including department stores, dry goods stores, stationery shops, book stores, drug stores, and sporting goods stores. These ads can tell us a lot about the cultural and economic history of toy magic lanterns--when they became popular and when their popularity faded, what kinds of merchants sold them, how much they cost, who bought and played with them, and how they were perceived alongside other kinds of children's toys.

My electronic voyage through online newspapers from all over the United States revealed interesting patterns about the marketing of toy magic lanterns that would have been impossible to uncover with a more limited data set drawn from hand searches of printed newspapers. First, toy magic lanterns appeared earlier than many people have assumed (about 1840) and lasted longer than most would expect (until about 1910), with a peak in popularity in the early 20th century, not the 19th century. Second, these toys were advertised almost exclusively as Christmas gifts, and specifically, as gifts for boys. I relate these patterns to the growth of a commercialized Christmas in America, the growth of department stores and the associated development of mass-marketing in newspaper ads, and the widespread gender identity assigned to toys in the 19th and early 20th centuries. My research also revealed that the charming toy magic lanterns now coveted by collectors, who will pay hundreds of dollars for some models, were incredibly abundant and extremely inexpensive when they were new. Few sold for more than about $10.00, and many sold for 25 cents to $1.00, complete with slides and carrying cases. Often they were simply given away for free, as premiums with magazine subscriptions, as rewards for selling packets of bleach, or as prizes in newspaper contests.

As always, I am eager to receive additional articles on any aspect of magic lantern history or magic lantern collecting for future publication in the *Gazette*. So if you are working on some new research or made an exciting discovery on Ebay, consider writing about it. If you have written an academic research article for another publication, think about adapting it for the *Gazette*. Only participation by a wide range of authors will ensure the continued success of our journal.

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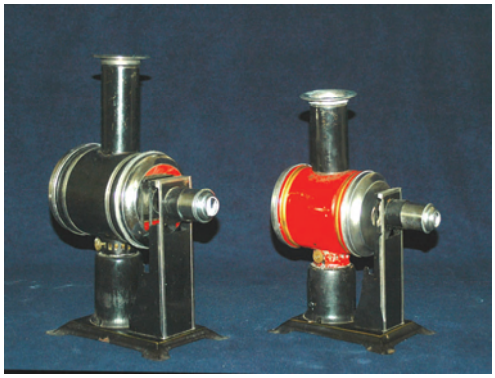

Magic Lanterns: Christmas Toys for Boys

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What better or more interesting present for 'that boy' could we suggest? He will stay home nights if he has a good Magic Lantern.

Advertisement for Hale's Department Store, *San Francisco Morning Call*, December 1, 1895

The boys' wants are looked after in a fine assortment of soldier outfits and uniforms, lead soldiers, horns, drums, magic lanterns….

Article on toys available from Abraham & Straus, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 30, 1897

A magic lantern is always a delight to a small boy's heart. This year the newest lantern is fitted with a device by which moving pictures can be shown.

"Toys That Act and Play," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1906

The nature of children's play in America changed dramatically during the course of the 19th century. For the first half of the century, manufactured toys were relatively scarce and were found mostly in the homes of wealthy city-dwellers. By the 1870s, however, things began to change. In addition to increasing production of toys by American manufacturers, the American market was flooded by inexpensive machine-made toys imported from Europe, especially from Germany. The metal-working factories of Nuremberg turned out an enormous variety of cheap toys, while the doll factories of Sonneberg kept the American market supplied with a vast array of dolls and doll accessories. By the end of the 19th century, German toy manufacturers controlled more than 60% of the world toy market and 95% of the German market. Total numbers for some types of toys were astonishing. By 1910, metal-toy factories in Nuremberg could produce 100,000 tin soldiers per day, while the doll industry exported 40 million dolls per year. Never before had such a variety and abundance of toys been available to children of all income levels. Included in this cornucopia of manufactured toys was a great variety of toy magic lanterns (Fig. 1). In Nuremberg, six firms dominated the export market in toy magic lanterns: Gebrüder Bing (Bing Brothers) (founded 1863), Ernst Plank (1866), Max Dannhorn (1872), Jean Schoenner (1875), Georges Carrette (1886) and Johann (Jean) Falk (c. 1895).[1]

Research on toy magic lanterns, and on 19th century toys in general, is surprisingly meager. Most books and articles have focused on issues such as identifying manufacturers and their trademarks, determining dates of manufacture, and illustrating different models. Books on the history of toys often are richly illustrated with color photographs of museum-quality examples, and the toys themselves are treated as museum artifacts or even

Fig. 1. German-made toy magic lanterns from the late 19th century. Toy magic lanterns came in a great variety of styles and sizes. Makers of these lanterns include (from left): Ernst Plank, unknown (possibly Jean Schoenner), unknown (possibly Ernst Plank), Ernst Plank, Jean Schoenner. Wells collection.

pieces of folk art. Toy magic lanterns usually are described as artifacts of the pre-cinema era, although toy magic lanterns were not the direct ancestors of movie projectors, and they remained popular for years after motion pictures were invented. Relatively little attention has been given to the cultural history of these toys, leaving a number of important questions unanswered. To fully understand the role of toys, including magic lanterns, in 19th century consumer culture and in the life of middle-class families, we need to know more than who made them and when they were made. Ideally, we would like to answer questions such as the following: When did toy magic lanterns become popular, and when did their popularity fade? What sorts of merchants sold toy magic lanterns? How much did they cost? How were they advertised? Why did they come in so many different models and sizes? What was the target audience for these toys? I address these questions by treating toy magic lanterns as consumer products and not just curiosities of the pre-cinema era.[2]

Recently, scholars interested in the cultural history of toys have used a variety of methods to understand the role of toys in 19th century life. One approach is to use published letters, diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies to reconstruct childhood memories of favorite toys and how children played with them. Unfortunately, individuals who leave behind such published records represent a very small and non-random subset of the general population, so there are limits to the sorts of information that can be gleaned from these sources. In any case, the number of such accounts that make reference to magic lanterns is far too small to allow us to draw meaningful conclusions, so, at best, we are left with a set of anecdotes.[3] Another approach has been to study the history of toys as business history, using a variety of 19th century catalogs and periodicals, especially trade journals of the toy industry, to reconstruct patterns of toy manufacture and sales, as well as patterns of toy consumption by buyers and changing perceptions of toys by middle-class families.[4]

In this article, I use newspaper advertisements for toy magic lanterns to provide a quantitative analysis of the evolution of these toys in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. My principal sources are searchable online databases of 19th and early 20th century American newspapers. In some cases, it is possible to search separately for references to magic lanterns in advertisements, whereas in other cases, finding such references requires a search of all parts of the newspapers, including advertisements, announcements of magic lanterns shows, general news articles, and even fictional writing and poems. By using a number of different databases available through university library subscriptions or free to the general public, I compiled a sample of over 900 advertisements for toy magic lanterns from 1840 to 1921, and over 200 advertisements for "professional" or "exhibition" magic lanterns from the 18th century to 1921. The newspapers in the sample include those from most of the major cities throughout the country, as well as many smaller towns and cities in most of the lower 48 states and even some territories that were not yet states, such as New Mexico and Arizona. Often the same advertisements appeared day after day in the same newspapers, so in my quantitative analyses, I counted each advertisement only once for each month of publication. Including all of the duplicated advertisements would simply inflate sample sizes without adding any new information to the analysis. This sample provides a reasonable cross-section of advertisements for magic lanterns across the country, but it obviously does not represent a complete sample of all such advertisements, because several thousand newspapers were published in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, most of which are not available in digital form.[5]

Marketing Magic Lanterns

Throughout the 18th century and the first four decades of the 19th century, the sale of magic lanterns in North America was the province of opticians, dealers in scientific instruments, booksellers, and stationers. Lanterns were relatively large, hand-made, expensive, and usually imported, mostly from England. As early as 1762, bookseller and stationer James Rivington of New York was advertising "The Magick Lanthorn" along with imported musical instruments and scientific goods, including telescopes, microscopes, thermometers, barometers, and surveying instruments.[6] Nearly twenty years later, Rivington was advertising "A curious and new invented Magic Lanthorn very useful for people at the head of affairs. This was constructed by an able artist under Lord North's immediate direction, for the entertainment of the good people of England; the spectators are highly entertained with an illuminated view of the fictitious object presented, but kept totally in the dark with respect to the real objects around them."[7]

Some merchants went so far as to mention the names of the ships and captains that brought goods over from Europe. In 1768, Garrat Noel of New York announced the arrival of a magic lanthorn, "with sliders and objects," along with a wide variety of other goods and scientific instruments, "just imported in the *Albany*, Capt. Richards, from London."[8] J. Carr of Baltimore announced the arrival in 1797 of the ships *Nelly*, *Kitty*, and *Montezuma* from London, with a cargo that included musical instruments, mirrors, and "a large size Magic Lanthorn, with lamp and reflectors complete, with 22 slides and one double one."[9]

Often magic lanterns were sold with a variety of imported "fancy goods" not readily available in North America. In 1804, Thomas Brewer of Boston advertised an impressive array of goods, "by the late arrivals from London and Liverpool," including guns, swords, daggers, military hats, jewelry, decorated boxes, ivory and tortoise shell combs, tea pots, riding whips, fishing rods, musical instruments, and scientific instruments such as camera obscuras, microscopes, machines for viewing prints, electrical machines, thermometers, and "Magic Lanthorns, with curious slides."[10] In the 1830s, a Washington, D. C. druggist, Glenn and Company, sold fancy French and English soaps and perfumes, but also carried other goods, such as snuff boxes, silver tooth brushes, French ink stands, and magic lanterns.[11] At the same time, Baltimore merchants Benjamin K. Hagger and Son announced the opening of a "Comb and Fancy Business," with the usual array of combs and other toiletry items, snuff boxes, razors, decorated boxes, guns, daggers, whips, canes, and a full line of mathematical, optical, and philosophical goods, including magic lanterns.[12]

John McAllister of Philadelphia, whose family name became closely associated with magic lanterns in the 19th century, started in business as a manufacturer of buggy whips and walking canes. By the 1790s, he was supplementing that business by selling a variety of optical goods, and he listed magic lanterns for sale as early as 1820.[13] Conspicuously absent in all of these early advertisements is any reference to magic lanterns as toys, or any association in the ads of magic lanterns with other goods that could be considered

toys. These advertisements generally made no mention of the goods for sale being suitable as Christmas or holiday gifts, and in fact, they could appear at almost any time of year as ships arrived from England.

Before the Civil War, most newspaper advertisements were simple lists of items available for sale. Merchants took out newspaper ads to announce new products arriving in their shops, but did not provide either prices or illustrations of the merchandise.[14] Nevertheless, from the 1840s onward, it is possible to get some idea of the cost of magic lanterns from advertisements announcing private sales of used lanterns. In 1842, auctioneer H. W. Bool of Baltimore advertised a raffle for "a Magic Lantern, of the best figures, larger than than life, with celestial figures, cost $180."[15] The next year, the same auctioneer advertised "a Magic Lantern, very large size, imported" that originally cost $120, to be auctioned with household goods.[16] In 1845, Oliver Brooks of Philadelphia offered for private sale "A Superior Magic Lanthorn, together with rich English and American Paintings embracing a handsome variety of humorous [and] changing slides—Natural History, Temperance, Sea Views, Chinese Fire Works, Scripture Pieces, together with some views of the Holy Land from late drawings." The whole lot was to be sold for $150.[17] Other private sales in Philadelphia in the 1840s listed magic lanterns for $100-$200, while an ad for a Philadelphia auction house in 1857 listed a double magic lantern with dissolving views for $150.[18]

Similar prices for exhibition magic lanterns appeared in advertisements throughout the 19th century. Clearly these lanterns were not toys, being far too delicate and expensive to be entrusted to the hands of small children. This is particularly true of early hand-painted lantern slides, which could be quite expensive. In 1843, a Boston auction house advertised a set of "large astronomical sliders for Magic Lanterns, painted to order by Jones of London, and probably the best thing of the kind that can be made," at $100 for the set.[19]

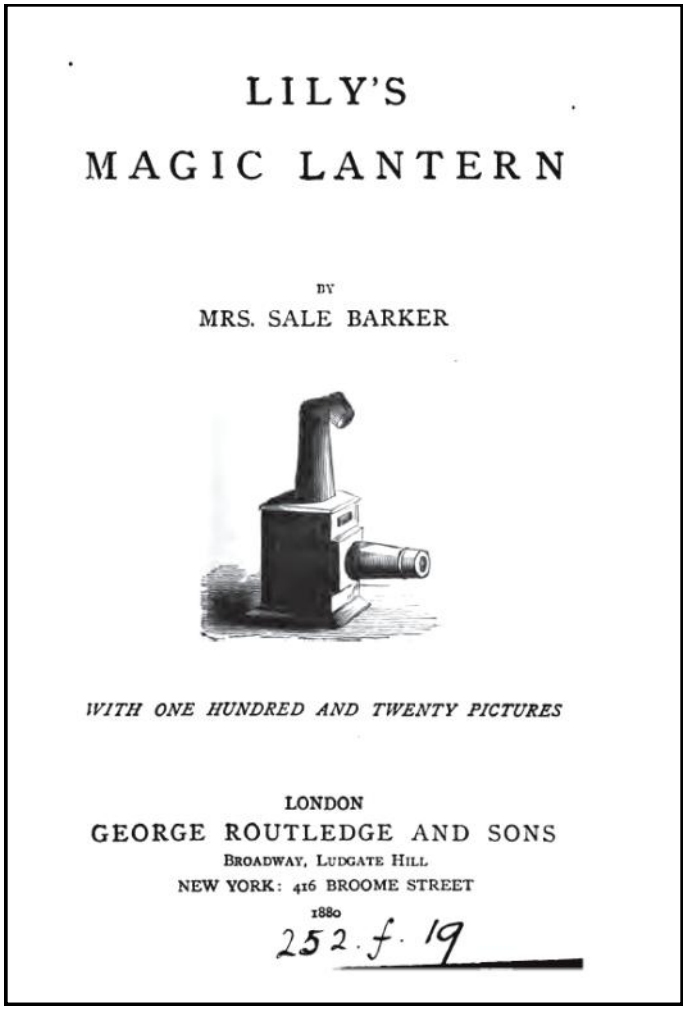
Magic Lanterns as Toys

There is no clear agreement about when magic lanterns came to be considered toys suitable for small children. Some scholars have dated the origin of toy magic lanterns to very late in the 19th century. Roberta Basano, for example, stated that "Just before the dawn of the twentieth century, the magic lantern was transformed from an optical and phantasmagorical instrument into a tin-plate toy," although she later discusses the manufacture of toy lanterns several decades before the end of the century.[20] These toys actually have a longer history than is generally recognized. I think it is appropriate to view the transition of magic lanterns from scientific instruments to children's toys as a two-step process. First, the idea developed that magic lanterns could be used to entertain children, even if adults operated the lanterns. Only later did toy magic lanterns appear that were suitable for use by children themselves. I would date the first development to sometime after 1750. The earliest illustrations of magic lanterns, in the 17th and early 18th centuries, often grouped magic lanterns with other scientific instruments in treatises on optics or natural philosophy. In the first half of the 18th century, prints began to depict magic lantern shows, typically with audiences composed largely of adults, although some children may be seen around the periphery of the groups. After about 1760, an increasing number of illustrations depicted adults exhibiting magic lantern slides to groups of children, although such pictures did not become common until the 19th century (Fig. 2).[21]

Fig. 2. Illustrations of adults presenting magic lantern shows to children became increasingly common in the 19th century. Usually it is the father or another man who is shown operating the lantern. From *Harry's Vacation* (first published 1868). Wells collection.

There also are occasional 18th century literary references to magic lanterns being suitable for children. In 1784, a book translated from French on the education of children described the use of a magic lantern to amuse and instruct children: "The idea of my tapestries, or hangings, have given me another, of historical magic lanthorns. I have had four or five hundred glasses made to represent subjects taken from history; and we have the diversion of the magic lanthorn four times a week. I take upon myself to shew it, and generally do it in English; by this means I give them two lessons at once; and as the pictures are often changed, I assure you Adelaide and Theodore are infinitely more delighted with our magic lanthorn, than the generality of children are with the sun, moon, and seven stars, the prodigal son, the baker pulling the devil by the tail, &c. &c." [22] In a morality tale for children, *The Two Cousins*, published in 1794, there is a brief description of a room in a house strewn with various toys: "There were no less than five dolls, tumblers, children flying a kite, horses and hounds, a large box with a very pretty show, a magic lanthorn, and a book of prints...." [23] Fictional stories and books with descriptions of magic lantern shows for children became more common in the first half of the 19th century, especially after 1830 (Fig. 3).[24]

This shift in perceptions about the type of audience suitable for magic lantern shows can be seen in the writings of Benjamin



LILY'S

MAGIC LANTERN

BY

MRS. SALE BARKER

WITH ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY PICTURES

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

NEW YORK: 416 BROOME STREET

1880

252. f. 19

Fig. 3. Title page of *Lily's Magic Lantern* (London and New York, 1880), one of many 19th century works of juvenile fiction that featured magic lanterns. Available online through Google Books.

Martin, a London scientific instrument maker and lecturer who wrote several books on optics and "rational recreations." Martin took a dim view of the name "magic lantern," considering it undignified for such an important scientific instrument, preferring instead the more sophisticated name "Lanterna Megalographica." In *A New and Compendious System of Optics*, published in 1740, Martin stated that "The Magic Lanthorn is an optical Machine...[which] has been since used rather to surprize and amuse ignorant People, and for the Sake of Lucre, than for any other Purpose," apparently referring to the use of magic lanterns by traveling showmen.[25] In a later book, published in 1772, Martin shifted his emphasis to the use of magic lanterns to entertain children: "A Magic Lanthorn, whose principal Use, as I understand, is to divert Children with the Appearance of ludicrous Objects."[26] By the 1790s, the notion that magic lanterns had degenerated from scientific instruments to children's toys was sufficiently widespread that another London instrument maker, George Adams, felt compelled to argue for the scientific merits of magic lanterns: "The magic lanthorn has been generally applied to magnify small pictures in a dark room for the amusement of children: we shall shew you that it may be applied to more important principles of optics, astronomy, botany, &c."[27] Later authors simply lifted wording from Martin and Adams, thereby spreading the notion that the magic lantern was primarily a children's toy. John Imison's *Elements of Science and Art* (1822) stated that "The *magic-lanthorn* is a small machine which has been generally used for amusing children, by magnifying paintings on glass, and throwing their images upon a white screen in a darkened chamber. But it is capable of being used for more important purposes, by using such figures as will explain the principles of astronomy, botany, &c."[28] Another book, also published in 1822, went further, stating that "This instrument, which was invented as a mere play-thing, has of late years been employed for more important purposes, by adapting it to figures that will explain the principles of astronomy, botany, &c."[29]

In reality, the more expensive magic lanterns sold alongside scientific and optical instruments never really disappeared. It is useful to view magic lanterns as having evolved along two quite independent tracks. The earliest magic lanterns were expensive, hand-made optical instruments, probably not produced in great numbers. As Savoyards and other traveling showmen spread magic lantern shows throughout Europe, less elaborate and less expensive forms of magic lanterns appeared. At the same time, "scientific" lanterns were being perfected for use in university lecture halls and other public venues, and this line of evolution continued more or less unbroken through the development of dissolving view lanterns, stereopticons, Marcy sciopticons, and other relatively expensive lanterns, culminating in motion picture projectors (Fig. 4). These sorts of lanterns often have been called "professional" lanterns. The term "exhibition lantern," which was widely used in American newspaper ads, seems more appropriate, because such lanterns were widely used in homes, churches, schools, and lecture halls by amateurs and professionals alike.[30]

Fig. 4. Professional or "exhibition" magic lanterns, like this model made by James Queen & Co., were marketed for use by adults in homes, schools, churches, and lecture halls. Wells collection.

Some scholars of the history of toys have referred to toys as "miniatures," and indeed, many kinds of toys are miniature versions of adult objects—toy guns, swords, drums, wagons, fire engines, trains, steam engines, dolls, doll houses, tea sets—the list goes on.[31] Toy magic lanterns, however, are different. They are not in any meaningful way miniature versions of adult magic lanterns. They share with adult magic lanterns basic characteristics, such as having a source of illumination in some kind of enclosed box, a slide holder, and condensing and focusing lenses. There were not, however, any toy versions of the Marcy sciopticon or a McAllister stereopticon or a biunial dissolving lantern, and toy magic lanterns did not show miniature versions of adult lantern slides.

Toy magic lanterns and their slides are much more similar in design to the early lanterns of the 17th and 18th centuries, and in many ways, are the descendents of the simple lanterns used by traveling showmen. Indeed, many designs, particularly of French-made toy lanterns, are nearly indistinguishable from 18th century designs (Fig. 5A & B). Because all toy magic lanterns basically work the same way, the form of the lantern is not closely tied to its function. Consequently, manufacturers were free to experiment with a wide range of whimsical designs, with bright colors and elaborate ornamentation that served no purpose other than making the lanterns attractive to children and their parents. Carried to an extreme, this trend led to toy magic lanterns in the form of pagodas, buddhas, automobiles, factory buildings, or even the Eiffel Tower (Fig. 6).[32]

Fig. 5A. Savoyards and other traveling showmen often were depicted carrying magic lanterns of relatively simple design that have much in common with later toy magic lanterns. From *The Lantern Image* (Magic Lantern Society, London,

Fig. 5B. Some 19th century French toy magic lanterns, like these models made by the Lapierre Brothers, retained design elements of the simple lanterns used by traveling magic lantern showmen a century earlier. Wells collection.

Fig. 6. Because the form of toy magic lanterns was not closely tied to their function, manufacturers were free to produce all sorts of whimsical designs, including the Buddha and Eiffel Tower magic lanterns made by the French manufacturer Aubert. Dick Balzer collection.

Magic Lanterns Under the Christmas Tree

In 1840, a Philadelphia importer and wholesaler, A. F. Ott Monrose, announced the arrival of a shipment of imported toys and fancy goods for the holiday season. Included in the shipment were the usual sorts of fancy items, such as perfumes, music boxes, dressing cases, opera glasses, and musical instruments. Monrose also offered a wide variety of candies and confectionary items, Christmas baskets, and something relatively new to the market, "20 cases of German and French toys, from $5 to $100 per case." These imported toys included dolls, doll heads (ceramic doll heads frequently

broken and had to be replaced), magic lanterns, woolly dogs, drums, and other toys. There is no description of the magic lanterns, but they probably were fairly simple stamped tin lanterns (Fig. 7). This advertisement is the earliest one I have found in an American newspaper that describes magic lanterns as toys for children. The ad also reflects the dominant pattern of advertising of toy magic lanterns in the 19th and early 20th centuries: the identification of magic lanterns specifically as Christmas gifts, although Monrose's ad actually appeared on December 28, three days after Christmas. The following year, Monrose was quicker off the mark, announcing on October 25 the arrival of 40 cases of kid (leather) dolls, drums, tea sets, magic lanterns, wooden and paper toys, sold in assortments from $5 to $100. Presumably these ads were aimed mainly at local retail shops, which could purchase toys and other gift items by the case and resell them to their own customers.[33]

Fig. 7. Some early stamped tin lanterns, probably from the 1850s and 1860s. The first German toy magic lanterns imported into the United States may have resembled the square lanterns in the middle or the odd-shaped lanterns on the right. Dick Balzer collection.

Soon other merchants were getting in on the action. Philadelphia merchant John N. Bauersachs, who may well have bought goods from Monrose, announced in December 1843 the opening of his "Cheap Toy and Fancy Store," offering goods for both the wholesale and retail trade. Bauersachs offered for sale, "cheaper than any Store in this city, the greatest variety of Toys and Fancy Goods consisting partly of Kid, Wax, and Jointed Dolls; Dressed Dolls, from 50 cents to $7.50 per dozen; Magic Lanterns, Masks, Harmonic Trumpets, Guns, Drums, Cups and Saucers, Doll Heads, Children's Tool Boxes, Games, &c." In 1845, yet another Philadelphia merchant, J. Evans, offered at his Variety Store "Goods for the Holidays," including "Cheap Dolls, Doll Heads, Toys, Drums, Horsemen, Harmonicon Trumpets, Masks, Fiddles, Guns, Barking Dogs, Tea Sets, Magic Lanterns, Games, Dissected Maps; Penny Toys, a large assortment."[34] In 1842, Pease's Great Variety Story in Albany, New York, placed a newspaper ad listing toys and assorted fancy goods for adults. The ad included an engraving showing "Santa-Claus in the act of descending a chimney to fill children's stockings," a copy of the first widely-distributed visual representation of Santa Claus, which had appeared in *Brother Jonathan*, a New York weekly, in 1841. Included in a long list of toys for sale by Pease were magic lanterns, along with dolls, toy kitchens, tea sets, games, rocking horses, swords, guns, drums, sheep and dogs, printing presses, Noah's arks, magnetic fishes, whistles, carriages, wagons, and many other items to delight children.[35]

These early newspaper advertisements from the 1840s reflect a relatively new development in American life, a child-centered and commercialized Christmas season. For the first several decades of the 19th century, Christmas was not uniformly celebrated as a holiday, either in Europe or the United States. When celebrations did occur, they often consisted of boisterous mischief-making and carousing in the streets. Partly in response to this sort of activity, Christmas became a more domesticated and family-centered affair, moving indoors and out of the streets (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. The child-centered family Christmas celebration with a tree festooned with toys, as shown in this lantern slide, is largely an invention of the second half of the 19th century. Toy magic lanterns, along with many other kinds of toys, were advertised by stores almost exclusively in the Christmas season. Wells collection.

The practice of exchanging gifts during the holiday season developed gradually and at different time in different cities and regions. The Christmas season became a time to indulge in luxury goods that most people would not have purchased at other times of year. Starting in the 1820s and 1830s, books

were popular gifts, and publishers soon established a thriving business producing fancy gift books, usually anthologies of poetry and prose, often illustrated with engravings and covered in fine bindings. Gift books peaked in popularity in the 1840s and 1850s, but in the meantime, other sorts of fancy goods and even toys for children began to enter the holiday marketplace. Initially, gift-giving was not specifically associated with Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, and in many cities, it was more common for gifts to be exchanged on New Year's Eve. The first representation of Santa Claus descending a chimney, from the 1841 *Brother Jonathan*, described the scene as taking place on New Year's Eve, not on Christmas. This may explain the appearance of Monrose's 1840 advertisement on December 28, instead of earlier in the month. The consolidation of Christmas as a child-centered event focused on toys, was largely a phenomenon of the second half of the 19th century in both Europe and North America.[36]

Toy manufacturers both encouraged and exploited the commercialization of Christmas, and no manufacturers were more effective at doing so than the toy-makers of Germany, including many firms that made magic lanterns. Certain regions of Germany had long been centers of toy manufacturing, with dolls being a specialty in the region around Sonneberg and metal toys coming mostly from Nuremberg. With the advent of machine manufacturing techniques, the ability of German toy-makers to produce a wide variety of inexpensive toys grew explosively in the second half of the 19th century. Ever-improving rail and ship transportation helped German manufacturers spread their cheap toys throughout the world. Production costs were further reduced by filling toy factories with large numbers of women and even children, who could be paid much less than men (Fig. 9). Christmas markets around the world became flooded with inexpensive German toys, including an every-increasing variety of toy magic lanterns and slides, and by the end of the 19th century, German manufacturers dominated the world market. Increases in toy production and profits were particularly impressive in the 1890s and the first ten years of the 20th century. In 1895, an estimated 1671 workers were employed by 141 metal toy manufacturers in Nuremberg. By 1907, those numbers had grown dramatically, to more than 5300 workers at 204 companies, with the largest firms, such as Bing Brothers, showing the most impressive growth. As a result, toys that once would have been luxuries that only the wealthiest families could afford, including magic lanterns, became widely available to range of consumers with different incomes.[37]

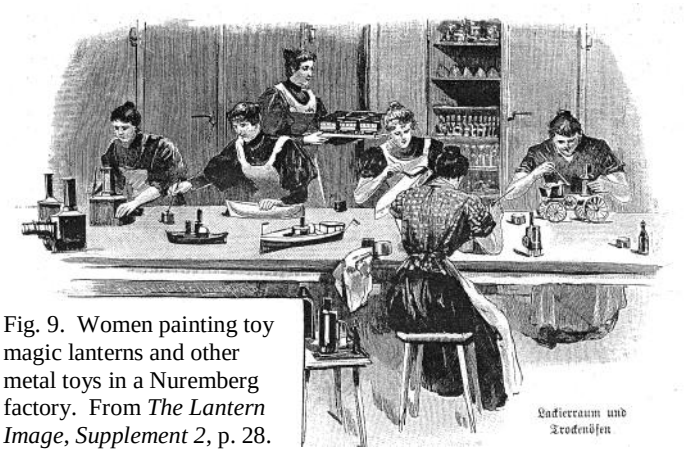


Fig. 9. Women painting toy magic lanterns and other metal toys in a Nuremberg factory. From *The Lantern Image, Supplement 2*, p. 28.

The Evolution of Toy Magic Lantern Advertising

Following the initial appearance of newspaper ads for toy magic lanterns in the 1840s, advertising of these toys in American newspapers grew very slowly until the 1880s (Fig. 10), and the number of different cities represented by these ads remained relatively small as well (Fig. 11).

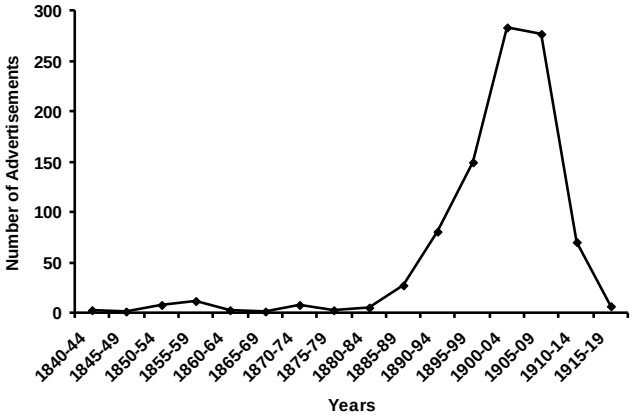


Fig 10. Number of advertisements for toy magic lanterns in American newspapers in each 5-year period from 1840 to 1919. The data represent the combined totals from all online newspaper databases used in preparing this article. The totals do not include multiple appearances of the same ad in the same month, as often occurred around the Christmas season.

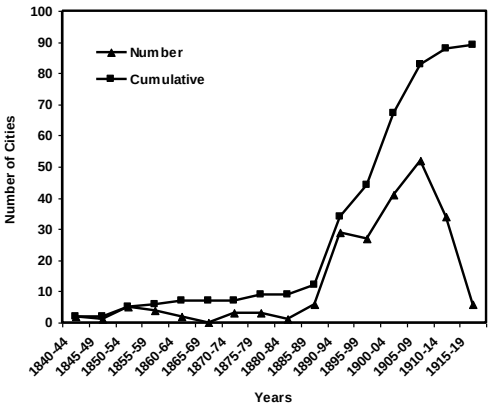


Fig. 11. Number of cities represented in newspaper advertisements for toy magic lanterns, 1840-1919. The upper curve shows the cumulative number of cities in the sample. Ads appeared in relatively few cities until 1890 and then increased dramatically until about 1910.

Both the total number of ads and the number of cities represented in the sample grew dramatically starting in about 1890, reaching a peak around 1904-1905. This pattern shows why treating toy magic lanterns simply as pre-cinema artifacts is unwise; the movies began in 1896, but advertisements for toy magic lanterns did not reach their peak until nearly a decade later. Like many cultural phenomena in the 19th century, newspaper ads for toy magic lanterns first appeared in the major cities of the northeastern United States and later spread to larger cities, especially port cities, in other parts of the country. By the late 1890s, toy magic lanterns were being widely advertised not only in large cities, but in smaller towns and cities in the hinterlands, from South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia to Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho (Appendix I). By the early 1900s, toy magic lanterns were as readily available to children and their parents in Cloverport, Kentucky or Butte, Montana as those in New York, Baltimore, or Philadelphia.

The dramatic increase in the number of advertisements for toy magic lanterns in the 1890s probably represents several developments in consumer culture that occurred in parallel, making the pattern hard to interpret. First, the increasing number of ads may actually reflect the increasing popularity and availability of toy magic lanterns. Unfortunately, we lack the data needed to independently verify the numbers of magic lanterns being sold in the period from 1840 to 1890, but it is possible that these toys were more popular than indicated by the number of newspaper ads (an 1874 description of Macy's Christmas toy display in New York reported that hundreds of magic lanterns were available).[38] Second, the dramatic rise in the number of newspaper ads for toy magic lanterns probably reflects the rapid growth of department stores, which became the principal retail outlets for toy magic lanterns and other Christmas toys in the larger cities. Third, the growth of department stores was paralleled by changing advertising practices. Large, full-page ads with abundant illustrations of goods for sale replaced the simple lists of goods of earlier decades. Most department stores featured toy displays as spectacles to draw in customers at the Christmas season. Newspaper ads mirrored the store displays in emphasizing the abundance and variety of toys available to consumers (Fig. 12).

HOUSTON DAILY POST: SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1901.

TOYS THIRD FLOOR — ALKEMEYER'S — THIRD FLOOR TOYS

TOYS — The greatest Toy Department in the State. Our entire third floor devoted exclusively to this department, and from now on until Christmas Santa Claus will hold full sway on this floor. — TOYS

DOLLS - DOLLS

5c to 6.50 Each

Fig. 12. Illustrated toy ad for Alkemeyer's department store in Houston, Texas (December 8, 1901), showing an all-brass magic lantern made by Max Dannhorn of Nuremberg, offered in two sizes for 50 cents and 95 cents.

Advertisers increasingly emphasized the low prices of toys as well, often featuring the lowest prices for items such as magic lanterns, but also stating that a bit more money would buy a much better quality product. Mark-down sales were commonly used to lure customers into stores, with items like toy magic lanterns often deeply discounted well before Christmas (Fig. 13). [39]

Rothenberg & Co

Growing Store — WEST 14TH ST — Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Promptly Refunded.

Every One Concedes that We Have

The Best Values in Gift Things.

"THESE ARE THE BEST OFFERS THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIND!" you can hear that any day as you pass from section to section among the busy throngs of shoppers at Rothenberg's. It is a fact that thousands are proving to their great satisfaction. We aim to give you the most that your money will buy, no matter whether it is the height of the season or whether it is clearing time. You can buy here with greatest economy; gift things; staple goods; ANYTHING.

Store Open Evenings Until Christmas.

Toy Prices Deeply Cut.

Offers That Stand Absolutely Unrivalled.

You can't find a more attractive display of toys, dolls and games than this. You can't equal our low prices in any other store in America. In spite of unfavorable weather, sales records are surpassing any that we ever made in the past, because we are offering extraordinary price inducements.

Ha'd Wood Writing Desk, nicely finished, size 18x22, with lift lid and compartments for books, regular price 98c; special..... 49c

Racing Games, a very interesting toy, well made, worth $1.50 1.00

Magic Lanterns, with 6 complete slides, well made 59c

Children's China Tea Sets, very nicely decorated, 18 pieces, packed set in box..... 49c

Kid Body Dolls, 17 inches long, with nice curly hair and moving eyes..... 59c

The Marguerite Doll, extra large, with handsome wig, and sleeping glass eyes, special at..... 98c

Fine Large Dressed Dolls, with handsome dresses and hats to match..... 59c

Wool Dogs, 25c
Mahogany Pianos, 49c
Horse and Wagon, 59c
Iron Cart, with Mule and Driver, 59c
Steeplechase, a new toy, 29c
Express Wagons, 23c
High Sleigh, 23c

Fig. 13. Ad for Rothenberg & Co. in New York announcing deep cuts in prices of toys, including toy magic lanterns, more than a week before Christmas. Discounting of toys before Christmas occurred almost every year from 1890 to 1910. From *The Evening World*, December 16, 1902.

One pattern that is abundantly clear is that toy magic lanterns were sold almost exclusively as Christmas gifts, as were most other kinds of toys. The vast majority of newspaper ads (86%) appeared in the first three weeks of December, and the only other month in which large numbers of ads appeared is November, usually after Thanksgiving (Table 1). Toy magic lanterns almost never were advertised for sale between March and September, and the few ads in February were for clearance sales of leftover Christmas toys. Toy magic lanterns were offered for free during all months of the year, often as premiums for children willing to sell items such as cheap costume jewelry, colored prints, packets of bleach, or subscriptions to newspapers and magazines; as prizes in newspaper contests; or as gifts with purchases of clothing (Table 1). I suspect that businesses offering free toy magic lanterns took advantage of after-Christmas mark-downs to stock up on lanterns that could be given away later in the year.

The pattern of advertisements being concentrated in the Christmas season contrasts with the monthly distribution of ads for more expensive exhibition lanterns, which appeared in newspapers at all times of the year, albeit with a slight increase in December (Table 1). Ads for exhibition lanterns

Table 1. Monthly distribution of number of advertisements for toy magic lanterns, free toy magic lanterns, and exhibition magic lanterns, in American newspapers 1840-1920.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Toy magic lanterns	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	115	800
Free toy magic lanterns	9	5	2	3	4	1	2	4	5	9	19	24
Exhibition magic lanterns	14	16	12	13	11	15	6	10	13	16	21	40

were placed by manufacturers such as James Queen, T. H. McAllister, E. & H. T. Anthony, and J. B. Colt, all of whom advertised nationally. Exhibition lanterns also were offered by dealers in optical goods, who advertised in local newspapers, and individuals selling used magic lanterns. The contrasting monthly distribution of ads for cheap toy magic lanterns and more expensive exhibition magic lanterns is evident in ads by one local dealer in Philadelphia, Theodore Harbach. This firm sold a variety of optical goods and frequently placed classified ads in Philadelphia newspapers listing items for sale. Harbach ads for relatively expensive magic lanterns appeared mostly in winter, spring, and fall (January-May, October-December), whereas 85% of their ads for toy magic lanterns appeared in December.

Who Sold Toy Magic Lanterns?

From the time toy magic lanterns first appeared in the 1840s until the 1870s, most merchandise in the United States was sold in small specialty shops. Some of these shops, such as Bauersachs & Company's Cheap Toy and Fancy Store in Philadelphia added magic lanterns and other toys to their line of fancy gift items intended for adults.[40] In 1851, Mr. Rogers's Fancy Bazaar in New York, presumably a similar type of store, began listing magic lanterns along with other kinds of Christmas toys, while in Hartford, Connecticut, local Stationer Elihu Geer included magic lanterns with his new line of Christmas toys. Geer was the only Hartford merchant advertising toy magic lanterns in the 1850s.[41] Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, a variety of small merchants in large cities began adding toy magic lanterns to their stocks of Christmas merchandise: Bunce & Brothers and Tuttle's Emporium in New York, John R. Diggs & Brothers in Baltimore, Dodge & Company's Great Republic Toy Depot in Brooklyn.[42] Auction houses occasionally sold toy magic lanterns as well, mostly to the wholesale trade. In 1852, Baylis & Brooker, Philadelphia auctioneers, offered assorted toys, including magic lanterns, individually or by the case. In 1861, Duncan & Company, auctioneers in San Francisco, advertised a "Great Sale for the Holidays! 50 cases of costly toys! Comprising dolls, magic lanterns, cosmoramas, tea sets, automatons, violins, horns, and wagons, moving figures, and a countless variety of desirable toys."[43]

In the middle years of the 19th century, a new type of store began to appear in America—the department store. This new form of retail store, which evolved from smaller dry goods establishments, combined the sorts of merchandise sold by smaller specialty shops into one large building with multiple departments, selling everything from adult and children's clothing to household goods, glassware, dishes, furniture, books, and an ever-increasing variety of toys. Alexander Stewart's Marble Dry Goods Palace on Broadway in New York, opened in 1846, was the first true department store in the United States. Chicago merchant Potter Palmer imitated Stewart's store with the establishment of his own dry goods store in Chicago in 1852, a store that was purchased by Marshall Field and Levi Leiter in 1865. They named their store the Marble Palace. Later, under the Marshall Field name, it became one of the leading department stores in the country.

Rowland H. Macy started a small store in New York in 1858 that rapidly evolved into a large department store. John Wanamaker opened a large department store in Philadelphia in 1877 (Fig. 14) and eventually expanded to New York, where he absorbed Stewart's original dry goods store in 1896.

Fig. 14. John Wanamaker's Department Store in Philadelphia (1896). From a stereoview. Library of Congress.

Other early department stores included Snellenburg's in Philadelphia (1869), Bloomingdale's in New York (1872), and The Fair in Chicago (1874). New department stores continued to appear throughout the 1880s, 1890s, and early 1900s: Hale's in San Francisco (1880), Gimbel Brothers in Philadelphia (1887) and New York (1910), Woodward & Lothrop in Washington (1887), S. Kann Sons in Washington (1893), Abraham & Straus in Brooklyn (1893), Hecht's in Washington (1896), The Emporium in San Francisco (1896), Saks in New York (1902). All of these stores became major retailers of toy magic lanterns (Fig. 15).[44]

Fig. 15. The growth of a new form of retailing, the department store, led McLoughlin Brothers to create this *Game of Playing Department Store* (1898). A magic lantern is among the goods on offer in the toy department, priced at $1.00. Wells collection.

The advent of department stores brought with it new ways of displaying merchandise and new forms of advertising. Stores increasingly focused on the spectacle of shopping, luring customers into stores with elaborate displays of merchandise that emphasized the abundance, variety, and low prices of goods. Newspaper advertising became more elaborate as well, with full-page illustrated ads replacing the simple lists of goods of earlier decades (Fig. 16). These trends were most evident during the Christmas season, when goods

Open Evenings Till 10.

Ingersolls'

67 Cortlandt St. { Two Stores } 111 Nassau St.

Final Suggestions!

Here are just two lines—always appropriate—but our stores show everything desirable, especially for young people's presents. Many exclusive lines—look them over.

Select Line—Quickly Seen—Prompt Attention—No Waiting for Change.

MAGIC LANTERNS.

Our importations on this line of goods far exceed that of any other American house, consequently we are able to offer values not to be had elsewhere. We call especial attention to the QUALITY of our goods, which is exceedingly high for our prices.

EXHIBITION OUTFITS.
Marvelously fine outfits, unrivaled in attractiveness and value. Each in strong carrying case, with slides, etc.—
11-inch, 1.39 11-inch, Brass, 2.48 12-inch, 2.75 15-inch, 4.50

OUR LEADER.
Thoroughly reliable and extremely good 75c. value, 11 inches high, with six 1⅝ inch colored slides..... 49c

BRASS LANTERNS,
complete with slides.
11-inch, 1⅝ slides.....98c
13-inch, 1⅝ slides.....1.29
14-inch, 1⅝ slides.....1.48

GENUINE PLANK LANTERNS.
Made by the best and largest lantern builder in the world; the PLANK, JR., is 12 inches high and takes 2⅝ slides; our price..... $4.00
Larger sizes.....$6.48, $8.25, $12.00

BLACK LANTERNS. Substantial, square shape, of Russia iron, nickel trim, built on professional lines, three extra good lenses, 13 inch..... $1.75
14 inches high, 1¾ slides..... 2.25

Fig. 16. Ad for toy magic lanterns sold by Ingersoll's of New York. Note the wide range of prices and the very low prices of the cheapest lanterns. From *The New York Times*, December 22, 1900.

were available in extra abundance, and newspaper ads carried illustrations not only of items for sale, but Christmas-themed images such as engravings of Santa Claus with a sack full of toys. Department store toy departments often were the center of attention, with many stores devoting an entire floor to holiday displays of dolls and toys. The object of these displays was to dazzle children and their parents with the enormous variety of toys, available at prices to suit almost any budget.[45]

Department stores often had large numbers of magic lanterns on display in their toy departments. In 1874, Macy's Christmas toy display included "hundreds of magic-lanterns...which seem to have such a powerful attraction for the boy element."[46] Another article in 1883 described the spectacular toy display at Frederick Loeser's store in Brooklyn: "It is, however, principally the little folks who are provided for, and how astonished they must be when suddenly plunged into that bewitching collection of printing presses, tin kitchens, magic lanterns, miniature blackboards, Punch and Judy shows, sheep, goats, lambs, and military equipment...clocks, watchs, organettes, drums, organs and other musical instruments, and all other things that delight children."[47] In 1892, Wechsler & Abraham in Brooklyn advertised "300 fine imported Magic Lanterns, with best quality lenses and one

dozen slides in a neat box."[48] Two years later, Hale Brothers of San Francisco announced that "We had dozens and dozens of brass magic lanterns, and were delighted that they sold so rapidly. They were marked $3.00 each. Imagine our surprise when we were told the other dealers charged $5.00 for the same thing."[49]

The growth in the number of ads for toy magic lanterns from 1890 onward (Fig. 10) mirrored the spread of department stores from the nation's largest cities to smaller and more remote cities like Richmond, Virginia; Salt Lake City, Utah; Dallas, Texas; Sacramento, California; Worcester, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; New Orleans, Louisiana; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (Fig. 17).

Fig. 17. Ad for toy magic lanterns sold by A. H. Pomeroy of Hartford, Connecticut, a major retailer of magic lanterns and other toys. From *The Hartford Courant*, November 11, 1899.

In addition, other types of merchants began stocking magic lanterns and other toys for the Christmas season. In Minneapolis, shoppers could buy toy magic lanterns from Kennedy Brothers' sporting goods store, along with a variety of outdoor toys and games (Fig. 18). Other sporting goods stores also offered toy magic lanterns for Christmas: Schoverling, Daly, & Gales and A. G. Spalding in New York (the latter became a leading national manufacturer of baseball gloves, basketballs, and other sporting goods); William R. Burkhard in St. Paul, Minnesota; Walford's in Washington, D.C. The association with sporting goods probably stemmed from the common notion that magic lanterns were toys most suited for boys.[50]

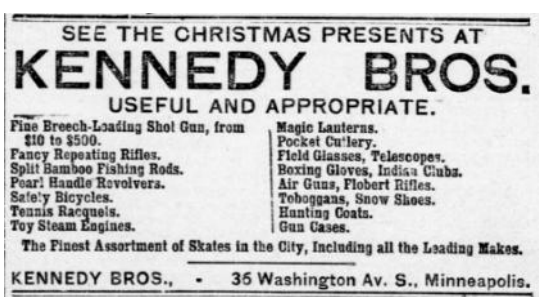


Fig. 18. Some sporting goods stores carried toy magic lanterns for Christmas. From the *St. Paul Daily Globe*, December 21, 1891.

Other merchants selling a wide variety of goods, some unrelated to toys, also carried toy magic lanterns for the holidays. In Omaha, Nebraska, shoppers could buy toy magic lanterns from Morse Dry Goods, the 99-Cent Store, or the Orchard and Wilhelm Carpet Company. Toy magic lanterns were available in Trenton, New Jersey, from The 4-Cent and Bargain Store; in Ogden, Utah from the Ogden Bargain Store; in Lancaster, Kentucky from Frisbie's Drug Store; in Hopkinsville, Kentucky from Cook & Higgens Drug Store; and in Box Elder, Utah, from the Eddy Drug Store. Local bookstores also sold toy magic lanterns during the holidays: Sisk Brothers' Book Store in Madisonville, Kentucky; Deseret News Book Store in Salt Lake City, Utah; Coe's Bookstore in Pensacola, Florida; and Strong's Book Store in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Certainly by 1900, toy magic lanterns were ubiquitous during the Christmas season in large cities and small towns throughout the United States (Fig. 19).[51]

Fig. 19. Ad for Ogilvie's in Paducah, Kentucky listing toy magic lanterns. Stores in small towns usually sold cheaper models of magic lanterns than did stores in larger cities. From *The Paducah Evening Sun*, December 11, 1908.

How Were Toy Magic Lanterns Advertised?

Regardless of what type of store was offering toy magic lanterns for sale, the way advertisements were structured was very similar throughout the country. Toy magic lanterns were seldom advertised by manufacturer's name or model, but instead were marketed by size. Because all magic lanterns are functionally identical, size is the major determinant of quality—large toy lanterns have brighter illumination and larger lenses than small lanterns and therefore can throw a brighter and larger image on a screen. Larger lanterns also require larger slides, which usually have better quality images. Toy magic lanterns came in a remarkably finely-graded array of sizes, with the same model often available in 3-8 different sizes, with similar fine-scale gradation in prices (Fig. 20). In the rare instances in which toy lanterns were identified by maker, they always were German-made, with Ernst Plank lanterns being the most frequently referenced. Lanterns from this company seemed to be considered the highest quality models, with some ads using words such as "Plank's celebrated magic lanterns."[52] Most newspaper ads simply listed "magic lanterns" without much information, but some ads referred to "imported magic lanterns," and some specifically identified them as having been imported from Germany. In ads with

Fig. 20. Many models of toy magic lanterns, like these barrel-shaped lanterns mostly made by Ernst Plank, came in a finely-graded assortment of sizes with a corresponding range of prices. The smallest lanterns of this type sold for as little as 25 cents, whereas the largest models cost several dollars. Wells collection.

illustrations in which the type of lantern can be identified, all are German models. There is no evidence from this survey of newspaper ads of any significant contribution of French magic lanterns to the American market, although other kinds of French toys, such as dolls, were imported. Some stores in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, a region with a large German immigrant population, advertised "Deutsche Spielwaaren" (German toys), including magic lanterns (Fig. 21).[53] In 1901, one such store, the St. Paul Book and Stationery Company, announced, "In order to meet the demand for first-class Toys, we have imported two carloads from Germany and France, which are now on display—not the perishable trash, but the best grades, made to use" [54]

Fig. 21. Ad for the St. Paul Book and Stationery Company highlighting "Deutsche Spielwaaren" (German toys) for Christmas, an approach presumably designed to appeal to the region's many German immigrants. *Minneapolis Journal*, December 19, 1901.

How Low Can Prices Go?

One of the astonishing findings of this survey of newspaper ads is the very low price of many toy magic lanterns. The first advertisement that I found which quoted a price for a toy lantern was placed by W. F. Daly, an optician in Baltimore, in 1866, who listed magic lanterns ranging in price from 25 cents to $35.00.[55] Advertisements with prices were rare until about 1890, but the lowest priced lanterns in the 1870s and 1880s were mostly under $1.00. The same pattern continued from 1890 to 1910, as more and more ads listed prices for toy magic lanterns; throughout this 20-year period, the lowest advertised prices were consistently under $1.00. Prices under 50 cents were common, with 25 cents generally being the cheapest price for a toy magic lantern.

The lowest price for a toy magic lantern that I found in any newspaper was 9 cents, in a 1900 ad for a sale of damaged toys by a Washington, D.C. merchant.[56] It is hard to equate these prices with modern prices, but by way of comparison, a full suit of boy's clothing or a child's overcoat could be purchased during this period for about $2.50, ten times the price of some of the cheapest toy magic lanterns. These cheap prices were not unique to magic lanterns. Nearly all types of toys were incredibly inexpensive, with many toys available for well under $1.00. There was virtually no inflation during these years, and in fact, the opposite was often seen—price deflation brought about by over-production of manufactured goods. Even with these very low prices, mark-down sales of toy magic lanterns were common (usually about 50% of full value), both before and after Christmas, suggesting an oversupply of these and other kinds of toys (Fig. 22). These low prices would have put simple toys within reach of even some factory workers, whose wages could be as low as $12.00 a week.[57]

Fig. 22. Price reduction sale of Christmas toys by the Hecht Co. of Washington, D.C., including magic lanterns for less than half price. *Washington Times*, December 20, 1909.

The abundant supply of magic lanterns and other manufactured toys, and the resulting very low prices, were a boon to consumers, but created problems for manufacturers and retailers. Profit margins on these items were extremely low. In the face of stiff competition, there was little capacity for manufacturers to lower prices any further. Workers in the German toy industry, many of them women and children, already were paid rock-bottom wages, a situation that led to labor unrest and even worker strikes at some factories in the early years of the 20th century. The low wages paid to German toy makers even attracted the attention of the American press, which ran stories on German workers making toys for one cent an hour, or 80 cents a day for a family of seven. Other stories reported on strikes by Nuremberg toy factory workers in 1906, although the same stories reported no diminution in the volume of toys being shipped into the United States from Germany. American toy manufacturers consistently argued for increased tariffs on German toys to counteract the very low prices, but the effect on the toy trade was minimal because American manufacturers often did not make the same sorts of toys as German manufacturers, including magic lanterns.[58]

With profit margins on cheap toys being very low, manufacturers and toy dealers had only one choice, and that was to appeal to higher-income consumers by producing higher quality and higher priced toys. This marketing strategy served an important social function as well. Toys essentially are luxury goods, and the ability to purchase a large number of Christmas toys for children became a symbol of middle-class status for families in both Europe and America. The problem with ever-decreasing prices for toys is that eventually even low-income families could afford them, thereby robbing toys of their symbolic value as indicators of wealth and status. Consequently, higher-income consumers sought out better quality toys, and the result was a proliferation of sizes and models of everything from toy magic lanterns to toy steam engines, trains, dolls, and many other kinds of toys. David Hamlin has noted that after 1900, "the most perceptible trend in the prices of toys was for the top of the line to become still more elaborate and expensive." He uses the example of steam-powered and electric toys trains from firms such as Bing Brothers and Märklin, in which the most expensive models could be more than 50 times the price of the cheapest models. He goes on to say, "Therefore, the gap between upper and lower classes in the years before World War I was manifested less in who had toys and who did not than in what kind of toys a family might have."[59]

This increasing demand for higher quality toys probably explains the proliferation of similar models of magic lanterns (Fig. 23), as well as the finely-graded sizes of lanterns of the same model. Although modern collectors often covet toy lanterns painted in bright colors like red, with brass trim, or all-brass lanterns, these models originally were quite inexpensive. One of the most commonly illustrated models in newspaper ads was a vertical red-bodied lantern trimmed with brass made by Max Dannhorn (Fig. 24), which sold for about 49 $1.00, depending on size. All-brass lanterns by the same manufacturer (Fig. 25) sold for similar low prices, as did the various vertical lanterns by Jean Schoenner, readily identified by the figure of Atlas holding up the slide carrier (Fig. 26), and the common horizontal barrel-shaped lanterns made by Ernst Plank and others. All of these models came in a range of sizes, with the larger ones being made of heavier metal and having brighter illumination and better lenses. Even lanterns with ceramic bodies, now much sought-after by collectors, sold for astonishingly low prices (Fig. 27). The highest quality lanterns were not necessarily the most ornately decorated models, but instead were the substantial Russian iron lanterns like Ernst Plank's "Gloria" model, which also came in several sizes and was equipped with quality features such as a rack-and-pinion lens focusing mechanism (Fig. 28). In the early 1900s, Bing, Plank, and Carette began producing hybrid lanterns that could be used to show both magic lantern slides and motion pictures, and the best of these models tended to be somewhat more expensive than ordinary toy lanterns (Fig. 29).[60]

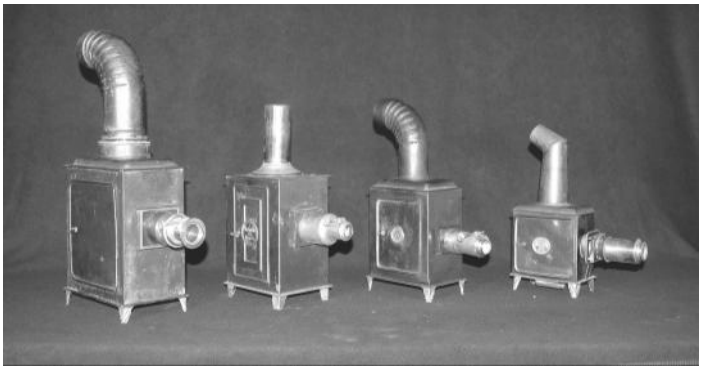


Fig. 23. Basic square Russian iron magic lanterns made by a number of different Nuremberg manufacturers. Merchants often highlighted the variety and abundance of toys such as magic lanterns, with models to fit every budget. Wells collection.

Fig. 24. A size-graded series of vertical red-bodied magic lanterns with brass lamps and chimneys by Max Dannhorn. These originally sold for about 49 cents to $1.00. Wells collection.

Fig. 25 (left). Two all-brass toy magic lanterns by Max Dannhorn, which sold for about 49 cents to $1.00. Wells collection.

Fig. 26 (right). This all-brass lantern by Jean Schoenner was made of a thicker grade of brass, but still cost only $1.00-$2.00, complete with a wooden carrying case and a full set of slides. Wells collection.

Fig. 27. This magic lantern with a porcelain body and nickel trim had a regular price of $4.00, but could be purchased for $2.50 at Snellenburg's Department Store in 1904 (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 9, 1904). Dick Balzer collection.

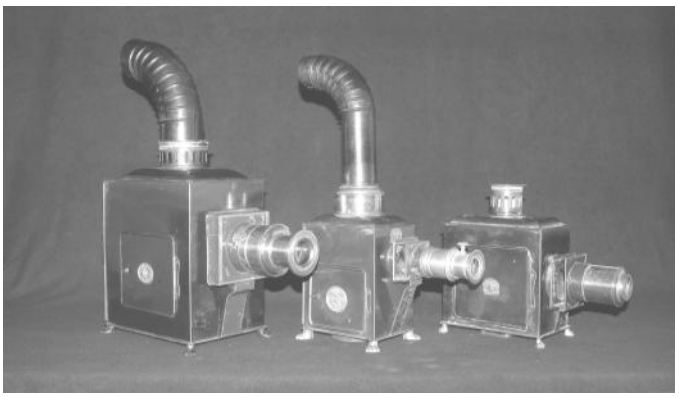


Fig. 28. Three high-quality Russian iron magic lanterns by Ernst Plank. These lanterns sold for about $2.00-$10.00 and were considered to be among the best of the toy magic lanterns. The lantern in the middle is the "Gloria" model and the one on the right is the "Amateur." The large lantern on the left combines design elements of both of these models. Wells collection.

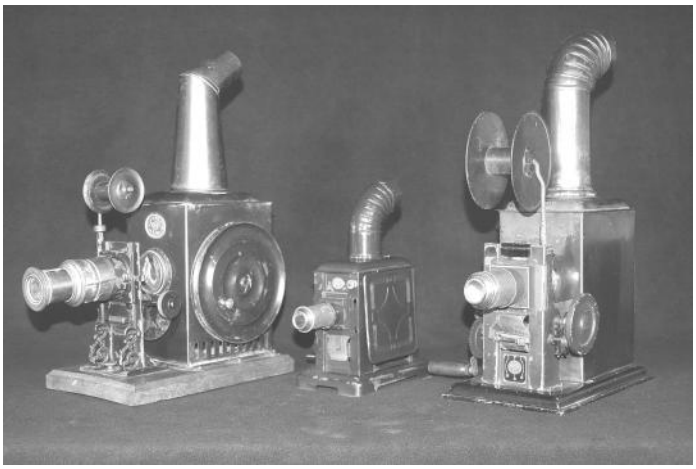


Fig. 29. Three models of Ernst Plank magic lanterns designed to show both lantern slides and motion picture film. The model on the left could be purchased for $3.49 at S. Kann Sons Department Store in Washington, D.C. (*Washington Times*, December 16, 1909). The small lantern in the middle probably sold for less than $1.00. Wells collection.

If the pattern of ever-increasing prices for top-of-the-line toys applies to magic lanterns, then we would expect to see a divergence in prices of lanterns over time, with the cheapest lanterns remaining at roughly the same price, while the more expensive ones should continually increase in price. To test this idea, I averaged all of the lowest advertised prices of toy magic lanterns for each year from 1890 to 1910 and then compared these values with the averages of the highest advertised prices in the same years. When only a single price was given in an ad, this almost always was a very low price, so those were included in the averages for lowest-priced lanterns. As predicted, the lowest prices for toy magic lanterns changed very little over a 20-year period, whereas the highest prices increased substantially over the same time period (Fig. 30). This clearly indicates that magic lantern manufacturers were increasingly targeting higher-income consumers in the early years of the 20th century, while retaining their stocks of cheap lanterns for lower-income families.

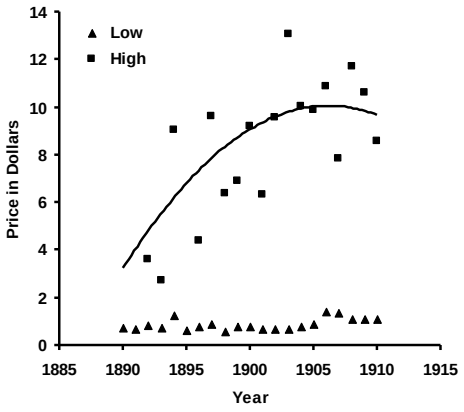


Fig. 30. Averages of the highest and lowest advertised prices for toy magic lanterns, 1890-1910. The curve shows the best polynomial fit to the high-price data.

Magic Lanterns as Toys for Boys

Perhaps the most surprising result of my survey of newspaper advertisements is the consistent treatment of magic lanterns as toys for boys. I first encountered this trend when going through issues of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and thought this pattern might be something unique to Brooklyn, or perhaps an idiosyncrasy of a particular newspaper copy writer. Many such references appeared in news articles summarizing the variety of toys found in local stores, while others appeared in ads for particular stores. In 1889, for example, an ad for Ridley's stated, "The boy of the family may entertain the guests of an evening delightfully... [with a magic lantern]." An 1895 ad for Batterman's announced that "Here may be found most of the large toys which boys have fun with.... probably the largest selection of magic lanterns in the city." An 1897 article about the toy selection at Abraham & Straus said, "The boys' wants are looked after in a fine assortment of soldier outfits and uniforms, lead soldiers, horns, drums, magic lanterns....," while another article a few days later about the toy selection at Bauland's reported that "...magic lanterns, with special slides...are among the special attractions for the boys (Fig. 31)."[61]

Fig. 31. Four boys with their toys on Christmas morning 1905. A magic lantern sits on the table on the right. Library of Congress.

Further research revealed that the tendency to associate magic lanterns with boys was not peculiar to Brooklyn, but was a nationwide, and very likely, worldwide phenomenon. From an 1872 advertisement by an optician in Hartford, Connecticut, who listed magic lanterns among gifts that were suitable for boys, straight through to 1921, many newspaper ads and articles identified magic lanterns as toys for boys. A few ads suggested that both boys and girls would enjoy magic lanterns, but I could not find a single example of a magic lantern being described as a toy especially suitable for girls. A few examples of the wording on these ads are given here, just a small sample of the ones that I found. In an 1874 ad for Macy's in New York, magic lanterns were said "to have such a powerful attraction for the boy element." An 1888 ad in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* called magic lanterns "the boy's delight." In 1891, an ad for John Wanamaker's Philadelphia department store declared, "Somewhere there is boy in your Holiday thoughts. 50 cents will buy a Magic Lantern..." The next year, an article on mechanical toys in the *Elizabethtown Post & Gazette* of Elizabethtown, New York, stated, "The toys which small boys desire nowadays are of the sort which will really work and do something.... A magic lantern that will afford a great deal of amusement can be had for the same price [$1.00]." The firm of Stone & Barringer in Charlotte, North Carolina, urged shoppers to "Come early and secure a magic lantern, just the thing for that boy," while Hale Brothers of San Francisco suggested a magic lantern was just the thing to keep boys out of mischief: "What better or more interesting present for 'that boy' could we suggest? He will stay home nights if he has a good Magic Lantern." According to Miller & Rhoads' Department Store in Richmond, Virginia, "Magic lanterns have always been a favorite toy with boys." In 1901, an ad for Macy's in New York suggested that nothing could please a boy more than to find a magic lantern on Christmas morning: "He'll be happy when he sees a Magic Lantern on the hearth (see back cover illustration)."[62]

It is not immediately obvious why boys would be more likely than girls to enjoy watching magic lantern slides. After all, there are many scenes in toy magic lantern slides that would appeal to girls: pictures of girls playing with dolls or doll kitchens, girls dancing around a Maypole, or girls picnicking with their mothers, just as there are scenes that would appeal mostly to boys (Fig. 32). The real key to understanding this sort of gender identification of toy magic lanterns is not the passive observation of magic lantern slides, but rather the active manipulation and working of the lantern itself. Magic lanterns were frequently listed in newspaper ads with various kinds of mechanical toys such as steam engines, express wagons, and trains, all of which were marketed almost exclusively to boys. Toys for girls, on the other hand, revolved around domestic pursuits and housekeeping, especially as reflected in doll play, doll houses, doll furniture, doll clothes, elaborately equipped toy kitchens, and other domestic miniatures. The result is that the range of toys available to boys in the 19th and early 20th century was far greater than those available to girls. Boys were being prepared for active jobs as adults: work as engineers, factory managers, soldiers, locomotive drivers, and a host of other professions, whereas girls were being prepared to raise families and organize

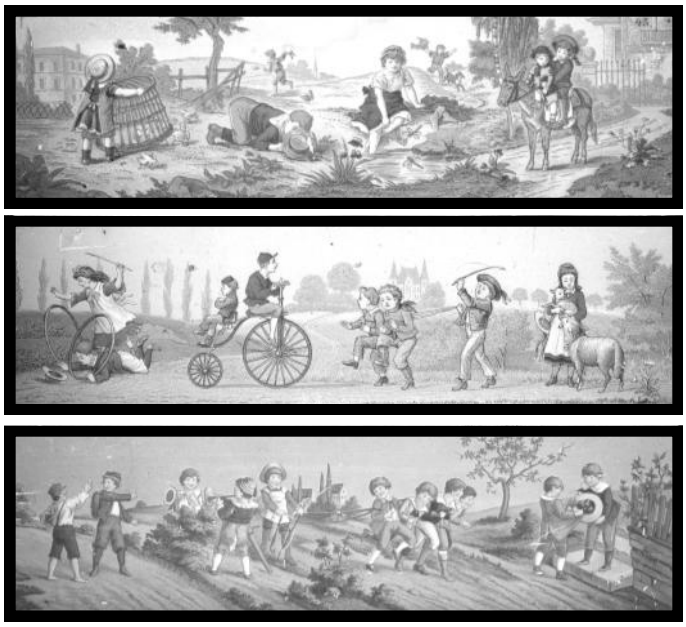


Fig. 32. Toy magic lantern slides typically contained scenes that would appeal to both boys and girls, yet the lanterns themselves were almost universally treated as toys for boys. Wells collection.

households. Toys that actively engaged a boy's mind were thought to provide suitable preparation for adult life, and magic lanterns fitted into this category.[63] One 1905 advertisement in the *Hartford Courant* put it this way: "The big boys—those whose faculties have become interested in things of greater magnitude than tin soldiers—find the world of Mechanical Toys fascinating, and are quite as interested as those whose minds have not passed the stage of wonder and astonishment at things unusual. They examine and compare with intelligence the things that run by steam and do not break down. And the tool chests and the magic lanterns have great charm for them."[64]

In some ways, the role of magic lanterns was similar to that of toy theaters, which were all the rage in the first half of the 19th century, and like magic lanterns, were marketed almost exclusively as toys for boys. This is despite the obvious aesthetic appeal of toy theaters to girls, who no doubt enjoyed the brightly colored stage scenes and elaborately costumed cardboard actors. Yet for the most part, girls were expected to be passive spectators at toy theater performances staged by their brothers or male friends. Boys were the ones who set up the theaters, manipulated the scenery and actors, and read the plays.[65] If we examine 19th and early 20th century illustrations of magic lantern shows for children, girls are much in evidence in the audiences, but the overwhelming majority of these pictures shows either boys or men actually manipulating the magic lantern (Fig. 33).[66] As Bryan Ganaway has pointed out, this gender distinction is even apparent in the pictures that appeared on magic lantern box labels (Fig. 34).[67]

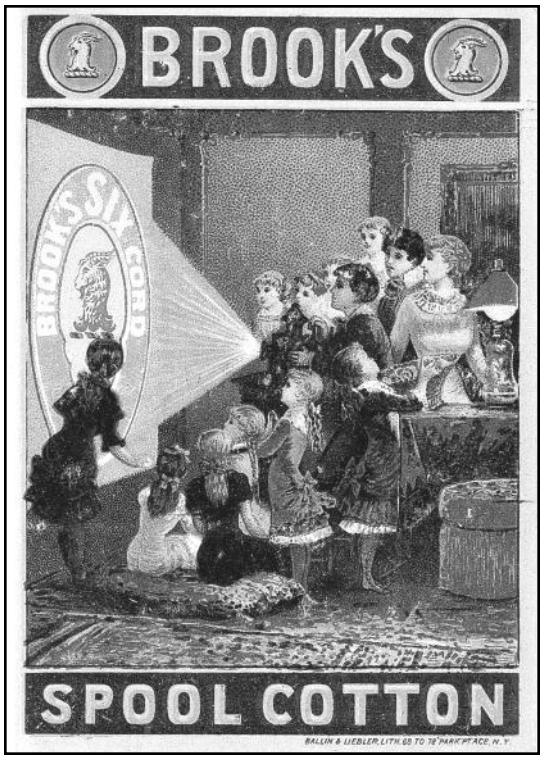


Fig. 33. This advertising card is a typical 19th century depiction of a children's magic lantern show, with a boy operating the lantern while an audience of girls and boys watches the show. Wells collection.

Fig. 34. Box label from an Ernst Plank magic lantern, showing a boy operating the lantern, with a mixed audience of boys and girls enjoying the show. Wells collection.

Giving Away Magic Lanterns for Boys

Beyond the many newspapers ads for toy magic lanterns, there are other lines of evidence that reveal a pervasive tendency to associate magic lanterns with boys. One comes from ads placed by clothing stores, which frequently gave

away magic lanterns with purchases. In every instance that I have come across, magic lanterns were offered as gifts only with purchases of boys' clothing, typically a suit or an overcoat (Fig. 35). Furthermore, this was a nationwide phenomenon, not a pattern confined to one or two cities. These giveaways of free magic lanterns with boys' clothes seem to have started in the 1890s and continued into the 20th century. In 1893, L. M. Jones & Co. of Houston, Texas, was offering "A fine magic lantern free with every purchase of $2.50 in boy's clothing." In 1901, the Alex Rice Department Store in Montgomery, Alabama, was advertising "A magic lantern free with every cash purchase amounting to $5.00 in boy's clothing department." In 1902, both the Trenton Clothing Company and the Rice Clothing Company of Trenton, New Jersey, were offering free magic lanterns, steam engines, or fireman's outfits with the purchase of a boy's suit or overcoat. In San Francisco in 1905, the Roos Brothers clothing store offered a free magic lantern to any boy patron, and the S. N. Wood Company in the same city made a similar offer in 1907.[68]

Fig. 35. Ad for Trenton Clothing Company in Trenton, New Jersey, offering a free magic lantern with a purchase of a boy's suit or overcoat. *The Cranbury Press*, December 4, 1903.

Toy magic lanterns were given away in other contexts as well, and in most, but not all cases, the giveaways were primarily targeted at boys. Some newspapers regularly ran contests for children and awarded toys as prizes. These could be puzzle contests, essay-writing contests, or even competitions to write the best letters to Santa Claus. Often when a variety of toys was given out as prizes, the magic lanterns went to boys, whereas girls received dolls or related types of toys. Sometimes the gender distinctions broke down, as with contests run by the *San Francisco Call* in 1902 and 1903 in which both boys and girls received magic lanterns as prizes. Many newspapers, especially in rural areas, ran ads urging children to become junior sales agents for companies selling everything from packets of bleach to cheap colored prints, costume jewelry, and magazine and newspaper subscriptions. Toy magic lanterns were common premiums in these sorts of schemes. Such offers were particularly common in the early 1900s and often targeted boys, although some ads suggested that both boys and girls could profit from selling a company's products (Fig. 36). The True Blue Company of Boston, advertising in *The Farmer's Wife* in 1906, offered a "big magic lantern" to boys who sold their products, while in 1908, the *Wilkes-Barre*

Fig. 36. Newspaper ad offering a free magic lantern to boys or girls who sold 24 packets of Bluine at 10 cents each. The ad incorrectly describes the lantern as a "powerful German stereopticon," when in fact it was a cheap quality toy lantern. Wells collection.

Times-Leader offered a magic lantern to boys who signed up newspaper subscribers. On the other hand, the *Kansas City Weekly* placed ads in 1908 in small-town newspapers in Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Iowa, and Missouri offering a free magic lantern to either a boy or a girl who signed up eight new subscribers to the newspaper.[69]

Dear Santa: Bring a Magic Lantern for a Boy

Yet another line of evidence that magic lanterns were primarily toys for boys comes from the words of children themselves. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, many newspapers published children's letters to Santa Claus during the holiday season. These were sometimes written in response to letter-writing contests, or simply sent into the papers by children's parents or by teachers who gathered them up in their classrooms. This was largely a phenomenon of smaller towns and cities. Newspapers like the *New York Times* seldom published such letters, whereas they were common in papers from Washington, D. C.; Richmond, Virginia; Pensacola, Florida; Dallas, Fort Worth, and Palestine, Texas; Earlington and Cloverport, Kentucky; Aberdeen, South Dakota; and Amsterdam, New York. I found 237 letters to Santa that asked for magic lanterns, of which 218 (92%) were written by boys. Sometimes several brothers would write separate letters, each asking Santa for a magic lantern. Earl and Floyd Sanders of Amsterdam, New York, both asked for a magic lantern in 1904, and in the same year, Eddie, James, and Phillip Kennedy of Plattsburgh, New York all asked for magic lanterns. Girls did occasionally ask for a magic lantern for themselves, or for new slides for a lantern they already owned, but I found only 12 letters from girls (5%). Another 7 girls (3%) used the strategy of asking for a magic

lantern for a brother. At least one girl really wanted a magic lantern, but thought her father would not approve, so she asked for other toys instead. Writing to Santa in 1900, Mildred F. Jones of Richmond, Virginia, said, "I want a magic lantern but papa is afraid for me to have one, so bring me a velocipede or a Patrol wagon, some good books, and games, and please dress my doll in a velvet suit."[70]

Literary Evidence of Magic Lanterns as Toys for Boys

There is a considerable amount of literary evidence that magic lanterns were widely perceived as toys for boys. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, many handbooks of play and recreation were published, and most of these books were aimed at boys. These books often contained extensive discussions of how magic lanterns work, methods of making slides, how to stage magic lantern ghost shows, and even instructions for boys on how to make their own magic lanterns. Some of these books are quite early, having been published before toy magic lanterns were widely available. Once of the best known in John Ayrton Paris's *Philosophy in Sport Made Science in Earnest* (London, 1824 and many later editions), which discusses magic lanterns and other optical toys at some length (Paris was the inventor of the thaumatrope, a popular optical toy).[71] *The Boy's Own Book, a Complete Encyclopedia of All the Diversions, Athletic, Scientific, and Recreative, of Boyhood and Youth* (London, 1829), has a long description of magic lanterns, phantasmagoria shows, and other optical effects.[72]

These sorts of handbooks for boys became even more popular in the second half of the 19th century. Among those with discussions of magic lanterns are *The Boy's Playbook of Science* (London, 1866, 1912, and many other editions), *Cyclopedia of Science Simplified* (London and New York, 1871 and many other editions), *Harry's Vacation* (1868, 1884), *The Boy Inventor* (Boston, 1860), *Every Boy's Book* (London, 1881), and *Cassell's Complete Book of Sports and Pastimes* (London, 1896 and many other editions). Even well into the 20th century, books such as *Gilbert Light Experiments for Boys* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1920) included instructions on how to make and use magic lanterns and postcard projectors.[73] Of particular interest is *The American Boys Handy Book* (New York, many editions from 1882 to 1907), written by Daniel Carter Beard, which contains instructions for boys on how to construct a home-made magic lantern. A lengthy companion book for girls, written by Beard's sisters, Lina and Adelia (*The American Girls Handy Book*, New York, 1888), does not contain any mention of magic lanterns, but focuses instead on house decoration, flower arranging, holiday preparations, watercolor painting, ceramic decoration, instructions for making fans, picnics, nature study, and outdoor games deemed suitable for girls.[74]

There also is a considerable body of 19th century juvenile fiction, both in periodicals and books, in which boys receive magic lanterns as Christmas gifts, present magic lantern shows, or long for magic lanterns in shop windows. An early story was published in *The Juvenile Gardener*, "Written by a Lady" (London, 1824). In this story, a boy receives a magic lantern as a gift, although it is left to the father to actually operate the machine:

> On New-year's day, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon distributed some presents among the children; and Frank was not a little pleased with his gift, which proved to be a magic lantern, with a variety of glasses, on which were painted beasts, birds, fishes, and views of cities and towns, with many other instructive and amusing subjects. In the evening, Frank assembled his companions in a small room, which had a white curtain hung against one of the walls; and opposite to this, the magic lantern was placed upon a table. When Mr. Vernon had prepared the glasses for exhibition, he ordered the candles to be taken out of the room, and by the light reflected from the lantern, the children beheld all the figures, moving on the wall, nearly as large as life. Mr. Vernon took the trouble of explaining the subjects, to the great amusement of the young party.[75]

Another early story published in *Aunt Mary's Tales, for the Entertainment and Improvement of Little Boys* (New York, 1827) depicts boys in a school engaged in various recreational activities, including setting up a toy theater and a magic lantern: "Some were preparing scenes for a theatre, which they intended to erect, and others for a magic lantern."[76] A story for very young children in *Little Nightcap Letters* (Edinburgh, 1868) has a boy receiving a magic lantern for his birthday: "I went up to a table, at which he had pointed, and saw what looked like a large tin box. It proved to be a splendid magic lantern! The children had saved all their money for many months to be able to buy it, and the little mother told me that when they came in a body that morning and give it to Charley, with their dear love and many kisses, their faces glowing with pleasure, it was the sweetest sight in the world to see."[77]

One of the most unusual stories of boys and magic lanterns was published in 1848 in *Clever Boys and Other Stories*. Oddly set in Florence in 1638 (before the invention of either the magic lantern or shop windows!), it gives an apocryphal account of the Italian mathematician Vincenzo Viviani as a young boy longing for a magic lantern in a shop window:

> Amongst the marvels that attracted his attention, there was one which seemed to rivet him in front of a shop window. This object of attraction was a magic lantern.... He took the somewhat bold measure of going into the shop and asking the proprietor to explain to him the construction of the lantern. A magic lantern was at that time rare, and highly prized. Viviani, once made acquainted with this new kind of toy, saw at once what an advantageous use he might make of such

> an attractive spectacle, if he could but take it through the different villages to exhibit to the country children. He laid upon the counter all the coin that his pocket contained, and asked if it would buy the wonderful lantern.

The magic lantern is too expensive for young Viviani to buy, but the shopkeeper agrees to hire it out to him, if he agrees to tell him each week how much he has earned giving shows. He sets out as an itinerant showman, presenting his magic lantern to people in local villages, but makes little money because the spectators cannot afford to pay for the shows. Eventually he encounters a man crossing the street, and he begs him to stop and watch his magic lantern show. The man turns out to be none other than the famous astronomer Galileo, who agrees to watch his show:

> Touched with compassion at the sight of the little suppliant, he yielded to his prayer; and not-withstanding the rain, condescended to stop for Viviani's exhibition. He listened patiently till the end of the boy's explanation, and when the representation was over, still remained questioning him upon the construction of his phantasmagoria.... So it is true that knowledge is a treasure, that Viviani had rightly prophesied when he said his fortune lay in the possession of the lantern: to it he owed his meeting with Galileo. That great man took a fancy to the child, brought him to his own house, and was a father to him. So sedulously did he cultivate the surpassing talents of the boy, that he became one of the first mathematicians of the seventeenth century.[78]

Some stories focused on the tendency for boys to get into mischief, thereby spoiling a magic lantern show. In "A Spoilt Christmas," published in *Stories About Boys* (Edinburgh, 1871), two boys, Fred and Tom, plan to present a Christmas magic lantern show, but through a series of mishaps, the show never materializes. Edward Turner, in a book of essays entitled *More T Leaves* (London, 1888), described the difficulties of allowing boys to run their own magic lantern shows:

> Among home amusements, the magic lantern is a most ingenious and delightful plaything, and my boys are very fond of it. It requires, however, certain accompanying arrangements which, from the parental point of view, may be just described as inconvenient. Thus, it does not make the heart bound with joy to see one of your best sheets ruthlessly dragged forth, a pair of steps taken into the drawing-room, the sheet nail with tacks into the ornamental wood-work of an arch between the front and back rooms, and splashes of water made at and round it from a pail. Neither does it make the bosom swell with gratitude when, as you sit looking by compulsion for the twenty-fifth time upon a policeman apparently following up a lion in a detective spirit and pursued by a tree, the vision suddenly disappears, a crash is heard, one operator calls the other operator a fool, an awful smell pervades the room, and you realize in the gloom of total darkness that the magic lantern has upset, and that the oil from the lamp is trickling over the new carpet.[79]

There also were stories about the tendency for boys to be profligate with their money, saving a few dollars only to waste it on some passing fancy like a magic lantern. This is the theme of Hervey White's "The History of a Paradox," published in 1901. A boy scrimps and saves to accumulate some money.

> Then, some day he would read a notice in the county paper of some wonderful toy that he longed for, and thereupon he would draw the money and buy it, never thinking at the time how his small amount was lessened. Once it was a magic lantern with wonderful pictures; once it was a toy engine; sometimes it was books; I think he never regretted a Shakespeare so long as he lived, but the rest were lamented sadly when in time they had wearied his fancy.... After all, his only hope was to save. Then he thought of the extravagance of the magic lantern and the engine, and he walked out on the level in the night, and cursed him for a fool and a weakling.[80]

Although there were stories about girls and magic lanterns, they seem to have been less numerous than stories involving boys, and frequently the girls themselves did not actually operate the lanterns. One of the best known is a children's book entitled *Lily's Magic Lantern* (London, 1880), which describes a girl receiving a magic lantern for Christmas. The whole book consists of descriptions of the scenes depicted on magic lantern slides, and the scenes are illustrated in the book with engravings. Throughout the book, however, it is Lily's father who operates the magic lantern, and she is relegated to being a passive spectator. In another girl-centered children's book, *Bessie Bradford's Secret* (New York, 1881), Bessie and her friends are treated to a magic lantern show (Fig. 37), but it is a boy who actually receives the lantern as a gift.[81]

Fig. 37. Illustration from *Bessie Bradford's Secret* (1881), a story about a girl who gets to watch a magic lantern show, but the lantern itself is actually a gift for a boy.

The Decline of the Toy Magic Lantern in America

Judging from the number of newspaper advertisements, toy magic lanterns reached their peak of popularity around 1904 -1905 (Fig. 10). By 1910, magic lanterns could still be found in the playrooms of many middle-class homes (Fig. 38), but there is evidence that the popularity of these toys was beginning to wane. The newspapers in my sample carried 276 ads for toys magic lanterns from 1905 to 1909 (not counting the many ads published repeatedly in the same newspaper), whereas in the next five-year period (1910-1914), there were only 70 ads, most of which appeared in 1910. This pattern is not simply an artifact of decreasing numbers of newspapers or advertisements for toys.

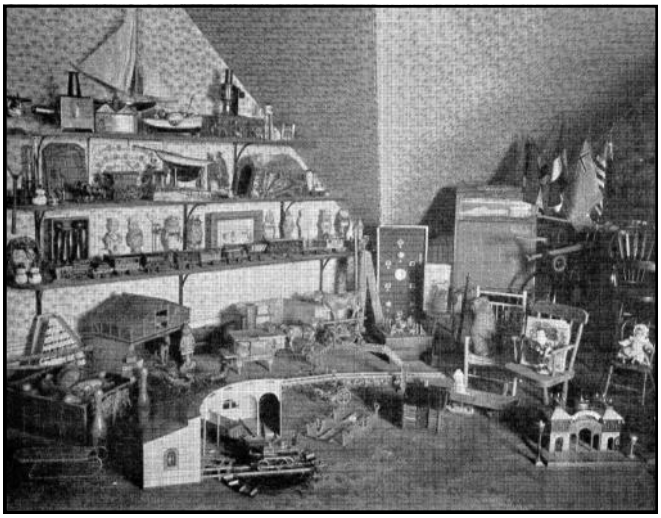


Fig. 38. Children's playroom, from an article on remodeling attics that appeared in the *Boston Cooking School Magazine* for November, 1910. Toys in the room include two magic lanterns on the top shelf. Wells collection.

The decline in advertisements for toy magic lanterns was particularly evident in the large cites. I searched the *New York Times* through 1921, and the major New York department stores continued to run ads for Christmas toys. Ads for toy magic lanterns, however, largely disappeared after 1910, with only a single ad for Gimbel's in 1913 mentioning these toys.[82] I searched the *Chronicling of America* database from the Library of Congress through 1919; the last ad for a toy magic lantern appeared in a newspaper from Canfield, Ohio in 1911.[83] Although ads for toy magic lanterns largely vanished from newspapers in large cities like New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and Washington after 1910, they continued to be advertised from 1911 through 1914 in cites like Trenton, New Jersey; Boise, Idaho; Kansas City, Missouri; Butte, Montana; Portland, Oregon; San Jose, California; Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Lexington, Kentucky; Aberdeen, South Dakota; Dallas, Texas; St. Albans, Vermont; Hartford, Connecticut; and Cleveland, Ohio. To some extent, ads for toy magic lanterns were supplanted by ads for toy moving picture machines, although many of these are included in my sample because these often were advertised side-by-side with magic lanterns, or did double duty as magic lanterns themselves. There also was a brief spike in ads for postcard projectors from about 1909 to 1912, but these never were more than a tiny fraction of the number of ads for toy magic lanterns. Ads for postcard projectors showed a decline after 1910 that paralleled the decline for magic lanterns (I will discuss these projectors in more detail in future article).

What accounts for the rather precipitous drop in advertising of toy magic lanterns after 1910? Most likely the movies were responsible. Nickelodeon theaters were proliferating at an astounding rate during this period, starting in Pittsburgh and rapidly spreading to other cities. By 1910, large cities like New York had hundreds of movie theaters in which boys could spend a nickel and keep themselves entertained for hours. Presumably the somewhat old-fashioned pleasures of projecting colored magic lantern slides on the playroom wall paled by comparison with the excitement of real moving pictures, projected larger than life on a screen. Even in small towns and cities, nickelodeons became a major source of entertainment for children. In 1910, a newspaper survey of 350 children in Willimantic, Connecticut, a textile-mill town, found that 90% of the children attended movies at least once a week, and many went several times a week.[84]

If toy magic lanterns were in decline after 1910, the onset of World War I largely finished them off. In August 1914, the German army poured across the border of neutral Belgium, thereby setting off the bloodiest war up to that point in human history. Beyond the obvious carnage and devastation caused by the war, it was a disaster for the German toy industry and the companies that made most of the world's toy magic lanterns. The British Navy immediately threw up a blockade of German shipping, which effectively cut off German toy companies from their best customers, which before the war had been the United States, France, and Britain. Shipments of toys bound for the United States were stranded for the duration of the war in ports like Rotterdam, because shipping companies could not receive assurances that their ships would not be torpedoed by one side or the other. The effect on the market for toy magic lanterns in the United States was immediate. The newspapers in my sample ran only six ads for toy magic lanterns from 1914 to 1916, and there were no ads at all for these toys from 1917 through 1919.

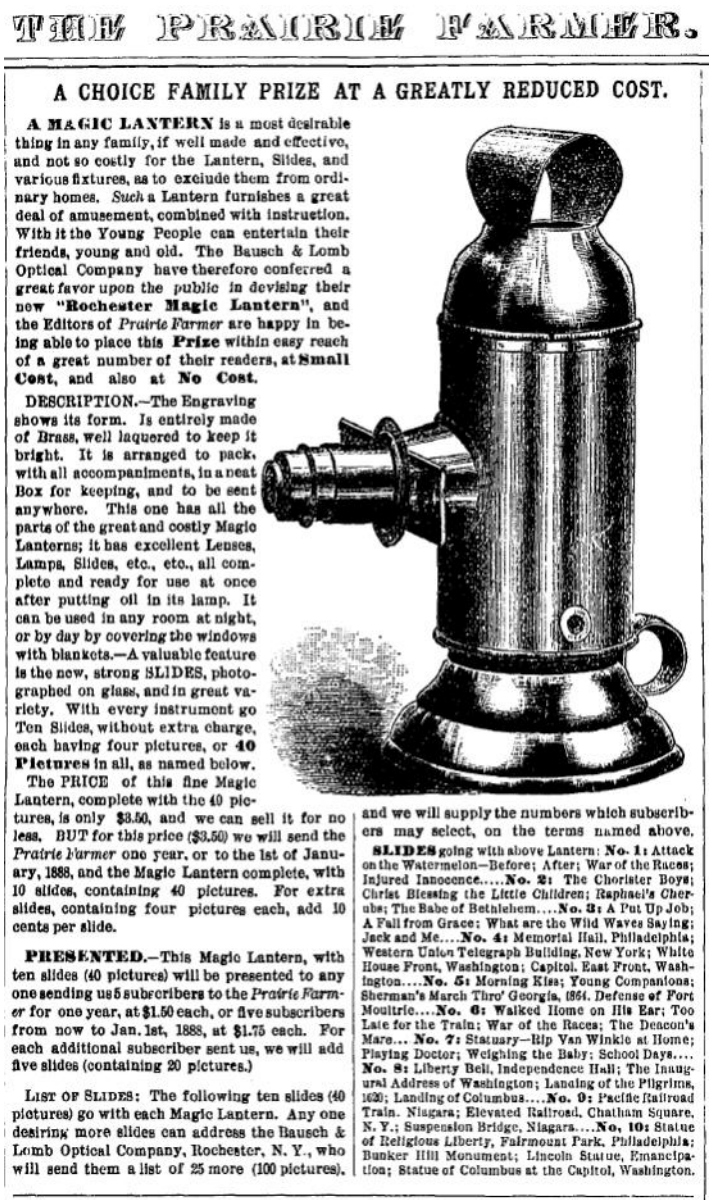
In Germany, production of magic lanterns and other toys slowed and then ceased altogether in 1917 as factories were converted to producing war materials. The firm of Jean Schoenner seems to have disappeared before the war, around 1906, and its magic lantern line apparently was taken over by Falk. After production was halted during the war, Falk resumed production of toy magic lanterns, which continued until the 1930s. The firm of Max Dannhorn was largely converted to producing war materials and was absorbed by Bing

Brothers in 1921. Georges Carette, a French citizen, left Germany for Paris, and his factory was seized as alien property. Ernst Plank's company survived and resumed the production of metal toys after the war. The company stopped producing lanterns in the 1920s and was bought during the depression of the 1930s by a company that manufactured optical equipment. The same company also bought out the Falk company in 1935. Bing Brothers, the largest toy firm before the war, survived largely intact and expanded production of toys after the war, in part by absorbing several other companies. Bing produced magic lanterns through the 1920s, mostly in the form of magic lantern/movie projector hybrids. Although battered by the depression of the 1930s, the company revived and continues to produce metal toys. [85]

A chief beneficiary of the disappearance of German toys from the American market was the American toy industry, which until 1914 had not been very competitive in either the domestic or world markets. Anticipating a shortage of Christmas gifts for 1914, toy companies ramped up production of dolls, toy trains, cars, and other toys.[86] These companies were not well positioned to make up for the loss of toy magic lanterns, however, because American toy-makers had never been major players in the field of magic lanterns. In fact, the few kinds of toy magic lanterns that were produced in the United States were made by optical companies, and most of these toys appear not to have been very successful.

In the 1880s, Bausch and Lomb introduced a magic lantern for home use, "The Rochester," named after the home city of the company (Fig. 39). This odd-looking lantern somewhat resembled a cross between a coffee pot and a thermos bottle. For reasons that are not clear, it was advertised mostly in agricultural periodicals, such as *The American Agriculturalist* and *Prairie Farmer*. It was designed to show very small slides, only 1 inch wide by 3 inches long, and could project microscope slides as well, but probably wasn't a very good projector. In fact, one periodical that offered this lantern at a low price with a subscription apparently received some complaints that it didn't work very well. The paper responded, "The little Magic Lantern disappointed two persons. The trouble evidently arose from not getting the wicks and light right. It really costs the recipient only $2 above the subscription. We do not commend it as a $20 or $30 instrument, but for a $3.50 one; it is far better than any that we could ever find for twice the money."[87]

During the same period, T. H. McAllister was marketing its "Gem" magic lantern (Fig. 40), which supposedly had a number of features superior to imported models, but it does not appear to have been a strong seller. McAllister sold other fairly cheaply made magic lanterns for home use, but these were rather unattractive big black boxes, utterly lacking the charm of German-made lanterns, and selling for a higher price. The "Radiant" magic lantern, sold by Peck and Snyder in New York, was another American entry into the toy or home magic lantern market, but this lantern also was



THE PRAIRIE FARMER.

A CHOICE FAMILY PRIZE AT A GREATLY REDUCED COST.

A MAGIC LANTERN is a most desirable thing in any family, if well made and effective, and not so costly for the Lantern, Slides, and various fixtures, as to exclude them from ordinary homes. *Such* a Lantern furnishes a great deal of amusement, combined with instruction. With it the Young People can entertain their friends, young and old. The Bausch & Lomb Optical Company have therefore conferred a great favor upon the *public* in devising their new **"Rochester Magic Lantern"**, and the Editors of *Prairie Farmer* are happy in being able to place this **Prize** within easy reach of a great number of their readers, at **Small Cost**, and also at **No Cost.**

DESCRIPTION.—The Engraving shows its form. Is entirely made of Brass, well laquered to keep it bright. It is arranged to pack, with all accompaniments, in a neat Box for keeping, and to be sent anywhere. This one has all the parts of the great and costly Magic Lanterns; it has excellent Lenses, Lamps, Slides, etc., etc., all complete and ready for use at once after putting oil in its lamp. It can be used in any room at night, or by day by covering the windows with blankets.—A valuable feature is the new, strong SLIDES, photographed on glass, and in great variety. With every instrument go Ten Slides, without extra charge, each having four pictures, or **40 Pictures** in all, as named below.

The PRICE of this fine Magic Lantern, complete with the 40 pictures, is only $3.50, and we can sell it for no less. BUT for this price ($3.50) we will send the *Prairie Farmer* one year, or to the 1st of January, 1888, and the Magic Lantern complete, with 10 slides, containing 40 pictures. For extra slides, containing four pictures each, add 10 cents per slide.

PRESENTED.—This Magic Lantern, with ten slides (40 pictures) will be presented to any one sending us 5 subscribers to the *Prairie Farmer* for one year, at $1.50 each, or five subscribers from now to Jan. 1st, 1888, at $1.75 each. For each additional subscriber sent us, we will add five slides (containing 20 pictures.)

LIST OF SLIDES: The following ten slides (40 pictures) go with each Magic Lantern. Any one desiring more slides can address the Bausch & Lomb Optical Company, Rochester, N. Y., who will send them a list of 25 more (100 pictures), and we will supply the numbers which subscribers may select, on the terms named above.

SLIDES going with above Lantern: **No. 1:** Attack on the Watermelon—Before; After; War of the Races; Injured Innocence.....**No. 2:** The Chorister Boys; Christ Blessing the Little Children; Raphael's Cherubs; The Babe of Bethlehem.....**No. 3:** A Put Up Job; A Fall from Grace; What are the Wild Waves Saying; Jack and Me.....**No. 4:** Memorial Hall, Philadelphia; Western Union Telegraph Building, New York; White House Front, Washington; Capitol, East Front, Washington.....**No. 5:** Morning Kiss; Young Companions; Sherman's March Thro' Georgia, 1864. Defense of Fort Moultrie.....**No. 6:** Walked Home on His Ear; Too Late for the Train; War of the Races; The Deacon's Mare... **No. 7:** Statuary—Rip Van Winkle at Home; Playing Doctor; Weighing the Baby; School Days.... **No. 8:** Liberty Bell, Independence Hall; The Inaugural Address of Washington; Landing of the Pilgrims, 1620; Landing of Columbus.....**No. 9:** Pacific Railroad Train. Niagara; Elevated Railroad, Chatham Square, N. Y.; Suspension Bridge, Niagara.....**No. 10:** Statue of Religious Liberty, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia; Bunker Hill Monument; Lincoln Statue, Emancipation; Statue of Columbus at the Capitol, Washington.

Fig. 39. Ad for the "Rochester" magic lantern in the *Prairie Farmer* for 1886. This small lantern, made by Bausch and Lomb, was an ill-fated American attempt to compete with imported toy magic lanterns.

rather large and therefore would have required large and relatively expensive slides (Fig. 41).

Once the war was over, a trickle of advertisements for toy magic lanterns appeared in 1920 and 1921, some for lanterns produced by German firms such as Falk, Plank, and Bing Brothers. However, the American perception of German toys had changed dramatically. Before the war, it was routine during the Christmas holidays for newspapers to run highly favorable stories on the wondrous efficiency and productivity of German toy factories and the high quality of their toys.

Send Stamp for Illustrated Price List of Microscopes, Telescopes, Lenses, Etc.

T. H. McALLISTER, OPTICIAN, 49 NASSAU STREET, N. Y.

McAllister's "GEM" Magic Lantern.

WITH FULL DIRECTIONS.

A new style of Magic Lantern, designed especially for the young; and intended to supersede the imported "Toy" Magic Lanterns over which it possesses the following advantages:

1.—The *BODY* of the GEM MAGIC LANTERN is convenient in form—is substantially made of strong tin, neatly japanned, and will last for years.

2.—The *LENSES* of the GEM MAGIC LANTERN are of excellent quality, accurately ground and polished, and define the Views clearly upon the Screen.

3.—The *LIGHT* of the GEM MAGIC LANTERN is obtained by the use of an improved Candle in a patented carrier which keeps the flame constantly in the central line of the Lenses, and yields a good illumination. As there is no oil or fluid of any kind, cleanliness is the result, and a child can safely operate The Gem Magic Lantern without difficulty.

4.—The *MAGNIFYING POWER* of the GEM MAGIC LANTERN is abundant, and the Views can be distinctly enlarged to 8 feet in diameter, or larger.

5.—The *SLIDES* of the GEM MAGIC LANTERN are neatly finished and highly colored; illustrating Fairy Tales, Caricatures, Comic Subjects, Popular Nursery Tales, Bible History, etc. (*See List of Gem Slides, on preceding page.*)

6.—The *PRICE* of the GEM MAGIC LANTERN is lower than that of any other Magic Lantern in the market, of equal size and capacity.

The GEM MAGIC LANTERN is of cylindrical shape; 6 inches diameter, 9 inches high, on firm base, with hinged door. The Condensing Lens 2½ inches diameter.

The GEM MAGIC LANTERN, HOLIDAY OUTFIT. Consisting of the Gem Magic Lantern, with 24 Gem Slides, 3¼ inches wide, 9 inches long, having 4 or 5 figures on each Slide; Screen, 6 feet square, with loops by which to suspend it; 12 Gem Candles; all packed in neat Walnut Case, with lock and key $12.00

The GEM MAGIC LANTERN, with 24 Gem Slides, 3¼ inches wide, 9 inches long, having 4 or 5 figures on each Slide . . 9.00

The GEM MAGIC LANTERN, with 12 Gem Slides, 3¼ inches wide, 9 inches long, having 4 or 5 figures on each Slide . . 7.50

The GEM MAGIC LANTERN, *without Slides* . . . 5.00

GEM SLIDES, Fairy Tales, Nursery Tales, Caricatures, etc., on Slides 2¾ inches wide, 9 inches long. *Per Set of 12 Slides* . 2.50

GEM COMIC SLIDES, with movable effect . . . each .35

GEM CANDLES, ... per dozen .75

☞ See GEM MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES, on preceding page.

*** The Gem Magic Lantern can be supplied with a Kerosene Lamp in place of the Candle, if desired.

Send Stamp for 136 Page Catalogue of Magic Lanterns and Views.

Cold Eye Classes and Spectacles for the Holidays.

Opera Classes of every style of finish from $3.00 upwards.

THIS "CONDENSED LIST" WAS DISTRIBUTED IN THE EARLY 1880's
1971 REPRINT BY R.M. GRAVER P.O.BOX 18051 ROCHESTER,NY 14618

Fig. 40. McAllister's "Gem" magic lantern was another American entry into the toy magic lantern market. Although McAllister's catalog claimed that this lantern had a lower price "than that of any other Magic Lantern in the market of equal size and capacity," it actually fell at the high end of prices for toy magic lanterns in the 1880s, with prices ranging from $5.00 for a lantern without slides to $12.00 for a complete outfit.

After the war, the Germans had been transformed in the American mind from models of efficiency to blood-thirsty Huns. Newspapers and magazines published cartoons of bloody hands holding German-made toys. Shiploads of German toys that had spent the war years stranded in European ports were refused landing rights in American cities. One such shipment eventually ended up in Mexico. At the same time, the American toy industry, fearing a reappearance of cheap German toys in the American market, pressed for high tariffs on imported toys and mounted advertising campaigns to get consumers to buy American toys. The Toy Manufacturers of the U.S.A. even distributed buttons to children to announce their allegiance to American-made products (Fig. 42).[88] American manufacturers, however, showed little interest in making toy magic

Fig. 41. Peck and Snyder's "Radiant" magic lantern, a large lantern for home use that competed with smaller and less expensive imported German magic lanterns. Wells collection.

lanterns, and in the postwar years, the interests of American boys turned away from the simple pleasures of the magic lantern to toys more suited to the modern world: mechanical toys, electric trains, Erector sets, Lincoln Logs, movie projectors, and other products of a newly thriving American toy industry.[89]

When newspapers mentioned magic lanterns, they increasingly referred to them in the past tense, as old-fashioned artifacts of the previous century. An ad in the *Duluth News-Tribune* in 1916 asked, "You remember the Christmas that Santa Claus brought you the very toys you wanted? It was a great day in your life when you got the engine, the magic lantern, the books, the skates, the doll, the sled, or something else you had longed for. Looking back through the years it seems like only yesterday—doesn't it?"[90] Another ad for a home movie projector in the *New York Times* in 1921 said, "If you had been able as a child to use the old, smoky magic lantern to create the antics of Charlie Chaplin or Douglas Fairbanks—what would you not have given!"[91] Still another ad, from 1930, put it this way: "'Pooh!' Says Your Boy to the Toys that Thrilled You. Can you picture the disdain with which your boy would greet the toys that thrilled you when you were a little shaver? A Jack-in-the-Box, a Monkey on a stick, a Kaleidoscope, a Magic Lantern, a Noah's Ark...no siree...not for the Boy of today."[92] Although cheap toy magic lanterns and other toy projectors continued to be available, the heyday of the toy magic lantern, "the boy's delight," had come to an end.

Fig. 42. Button for the "American Made Toy Brigade," an effort by American toy manufacturers to steer consumers away from German toys. Wells collection.

Notes and References

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4. Hamlin (2007), Ganaway (2009) (see note 1); Kenneth D. Brown, *The British Toy Business: A History Since 1700* (Hambledon Press, London, 1996).

5. The newspaper databases used in this study all are available through university library subscriptions or free to the public; there are other databases that can be accessed only by paid subscription that I did not use. The two major databases used in this study were *America's Historical Newspapers 1690-1922* and *Chronicling America 1880-1922*. The former, based on collections of the American Antiquarian Society, is particularly strong in newspapers from the first half of the 19th century and from the northeastern states. The latter, from the Library of Congress, is strong in late 19th and early 20th century newspapers, particularly small towns and cities, but is weak on northeastern papers (there are no papers from Massachusetts in this database, for example). Other databases searched included *The New York Times* (1851-1921), *The Hartford Courant* (1764-1922), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1841-1902), *California Digital Newspaper Collection* (1849-1911), *Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection* (1859-1923), *Florida Digital Newspaper Library*, *Milledgeville (Georgia) Historic Newspapers* (1810-1920), *Farm, Field and Fireside Agricultural Newspaper Collection (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)*, *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection* (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) (1903-1936), *Sioux County (Iowa) Newspaper Archives* (1872-2007), *Carroll Public Library Archives, Carroll County, Iowa* (1884-1997), *Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Library Archives, Linn County* (1857-1998), *Kentuckiana Digital Library*, *Barnstable (Massachusetts) Patriot (1830-1930)*, *Winona (Minnesota) Newspaper Project (1855-1946)*, *Cranbury (New Jersey) Press (1886-1926)*, *Upstate New York Historical Papers*, *Suffolk County (New York) Historic Newspapers*, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards* (a database of New York state newspapers), *Pennsylvania Civil War Newspapers*, *Utah Digital Newspapers*, *Washington Historic Newspapers (1852-1892)*. Some of these yielded many references to magic lanterns; others had few such references. Because ads can be located rather easily by online searching, I have omitted specific page numbers for most references to newspaper ads, although pages are given in some cases where particular points of interest are cited.

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7. New Haven *Connecticut Journal*, December 6, 1781, p. 1.

8. *New-York Gazette or The Weekly Post-Boy*, June 6, 1768, p. 4.

9. *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, October 28, 1797, p. 4.

10. *Columbian Sentinel* (Boston), June 20, 1804, p. 4

11. *Daily National Journal* (Washington, D.C.), January 4, February 24, 1831.

12. *Baltimore Patriot*, December 16, 1831.

13. Deac Rossell, McAllister, pp. 181-182, in: David Robinson, Stephen Herbert, and Richard Crangle, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Magic Lantern* (The Magic Lantern Society, London, 2001). McAllister ad for magic lanterns: *Poulson's American Advertiser* (Philadelphia), October 11, 1820.

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23. *The Two Cousins, a Moral Story for the Use of Young Persons* (E. Newbery, London, 1794), p. 42.

24. See notes 76-81 for examples of juvenile fiction about magic lanterns.

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79. Ascott R. Hope, *Stories About Boys* (William P. Nimmo, Edinburgh, 1871), pp. 185-199; Edward F. Turner, *More T Leaves* (Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1888), pp. 56-57.

80. Hervey White, "The History of a Paradox," in: *When Eve Was Not Created and Other Stories* (Small, Maynard & Company, Boston, 1901), pp. 185-186.

81. Mrs. Sale Baker, *Lily's Magic Lantern* (George Routledge & Sons, London, 1880); Joanna H. Mathews, *Bessie Bradford's Secret* (Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., New York, 1881), pp. 241-242.

82. Ad for Gimbel's: *New York Times*, December 7, 1913.

83. Ad for Weil-Hartzell Co.: *Mahoning Dispatch*, December 15, 1911.

84. Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990), p. 2.

85. For discussion of the effect of World War I on toy and magic lantern production in Germany, see Hamlin (2007), Ganaway (2009), and Lange-Fuchs (1998) (see note 1). See also: "Imports Affected by War Embargo," *New York Times*, August 20, 1914, p. 4; "Trade Losses in Europe's Big War," *New York Times*, August 30, 1914, p. X12. An ad for Gimbel Brothers Department Store told the story of some German toys being spirited out of Dutch ports on small steamers to New York, providing an assortment of imported toys for Christmas: *New York Times*, November 21, 1914, p. 5.

86. "Toy Factories Rushed," *New York Times*, November 16, 1914, p. 11; "Santa Claus's Pack Full Despite War," *New York Times*, November 21, 1915, p. 8; "Losing Toy Markets," *New York Times*, September 21, 1916, p. 19; "American Toy Trade Greatly Helped by War," *New York Times*, March 4, 1917, p. X7; "Germany's Lost Toy Trade," *New York Times*, December 25, 1917, p. 14.

87. *Prairie Farmer*, January 29, 1887.

88. "Women Open Fight to Bar German Toys," *New York Times*, October 26, 1918, p. 14; "Refuse to Accept German-Made Toys," *New York Times*, October 27, 1918, p. 1; "Want Law to Bar All German Goods," *New York Times*, October 29, 1918, p. 15; "More Merchants Bar German Toys, *New York Times*, October 31, 1918, p. 7; "Calls for Surrender of German Toys so That All Now Here Can be Destroyed," *New York Times*, November 10, 1918, p. 25; "Won't Buy German Goods," *New York Times*, November 27, 1918, p. 12; "Hails Teuton Boycott," *New York Times*, December 1, 1918, p. 17; "Boycott German Toys," *New York Times*, May 28, 1919, p. 10; "Sell German Toys to Mexican Firm," *New York Times*, May 29, 1919, p. 13; "American Toys are Doing Very Well," *New York Times*, December 19, 1920, p. E18; "Toy Trade Fears German Rivalry," *New York Times*, March 26, 1921, p. 8; "Cheap German Toys a Blow to Our Trade, *New York Times*, March 29, 1921, p. 10; "Toymakers Ask Tariff," *New York Times*, July 22, 1921, p. 8; "Lack of Toy Orders," *New York Times*, May 21, 1922, p.44; "Many German Toy Orders Unfilled," *New York Times*, October 8, 1922, p. 46.

89. For discussions of the changing tastes in toys of American boys in the 20th century, see: Gary Cross, *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997); Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early 20th Century* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2004).

90. Ad for Gray's Toyland: *Duluth News-Tribune*, December 17, 1916.

91. Ad for Herbert & Huesgen Co.: *New York Times*, December 6, 1921.

92. *Daily Illini* (Urbana, Illinois), December 11, 1930.

Appendix I. Cities represented in samples of newspaper advertisements for toy magic lanterns in five-year periods from 1840 to 1919. Underlined cities represent those new to the sample in each time period.

1840-44: Philadelphia PA, Baltimore MD

1845-49: Philadelphia PA

1850-54: Philadelphia PA, Baltimore MD, New York, Hartford CT, Brooklyn NY

1855-59: New York, Hartford CT, Brooklyn NY, Charleston SC

1860-64: Hartford CT, San Francisco CA

1865-69: No advertisements

1870-74: New York, Hartford CT, Brooklyn NY

1875-79: Baltimore MD, Indianapolis IN, Wheeling WV

1880-84: Brooklyn NY

1885-89: Philadelphia PA, New York, Brooklyn NY, Chicago IL, Trenton NJ, Kalamazoo MI

1890-94: New York, Baltimore MD, Hartford CT, Brooklyn NY, Chicago IL, Trenton NJ, San Francisco CA, Worcester, MA, Dallas TX, Knoxville TN, St. Paul MN, Omaha NE, Minneapolis MN, Columbus GA, Kirskville MO, Sacramento CA, New Orleans LA, Kansas City MO, Winona MN, Duluth MN, Houston TX, Richmond VA, Cloverport KY, Hardingsburg KY, Charlotte NC, St. Louis MO, Fort Worth TX

1895-99: New York, Hartford CT, Brooklyn NY, Chicago IL, Trenton NJ, Philadelphia PA, San Francisco CA, Sacramento CA, Richmond VA, Omaha NE, Cloverport KY, St. Paul MN, Worcester MA, Duluth MN, Kansas City MO, Forth Worth TX, Houston TX, Southold NY, Washington DC, Ogden UT, Scranton PA, Aspen CO, Sioux City IA, Grand Forks ND, McCook NE, New Haven CT, Grand Rapids MI

1900-04: New York, Philadelphia PA, Brooklyn NY, Grand Forks ND, Omaha NE, San Francisco CA, Washington DC, St. Paul MN, Richmond VA, Scranton PA, New Orleans LA, Minneapolis MN, Trenton NJ, Hartford CT, Dallas TX, Houston TX, Fort Worth TX, Kansas City MO, Salt Lake City UT, St. Albans VT, Park City UT, Hopkinsville KY, Wilkes-Barre PA, Pawtucket RI, Jackson CA, Olympia WA, Butte MT, Boston MA, Prescott AZ, Newark NJ, San Antonio TX, Paris KY, Biloxi MS, Lancaster KY, Colorado Springs, CO, Paducah KY, Huntington NY, Safford AZ, Hartford KY, Evansville IN

1905-09: New York, San Francisco CA, Hartford CT, Paducah KY, Philadelphia PA, Washington DC, Salt Lake City UT, Hartford KY, Baltimore MD, Colorado Springs CO, Boston MA, Wilkes-Barre PA, Cloverport KY, St. Albans VT, Grand Forks ND, Biloxi MS, Paris KY, Evansville IN, Trenton NJ, Hopkinsville KY, Fort Worth TX, Kansas City MO, Park City UT, Dallas TX, Butte MT, Duluth MN, Brooklyn NY, Ogden UT, Lexington KY, Winona MN, Huntington NY, McCook NE, Los Angeles CA, Earlington KY, Falls City NE, Pensacola FL, Ocala FL, Valentine NE, Frankfort KY, Watertown NY, Des Moines IA, Palestine TX, Eureka UT, Montgomery AL, Louisville KY, Springfield MA, Pullman WA, Canfield OH, Albuqueque NM, Boise ID

1910-14: New York, San Francisco CA, Trenton NJ, Philadelphia PA, Butte MT, Washington DC, Wilkes-Barre PA, Hopkinsville KY, Pullman WA, Boston MA, Albuquerque NM, Earlington KY, Butte MT, Grand Forks ND, Colorado Springs CO, Boise ID, Salt Lake City UT, Kansas City MO, Dallas TX, Canfield OH, Hartford CT, Lexington KY, St. Albans VT, Des Moines IA, Cleveland OH, San Jose CA, Springfield MO, Box Elder UT, Portland OR, Aberdeen SD

1915-19: New York, Boise ID, St. Albans VT, Duluth MN, Kansas City MO, Potsdam NY

Magic Lanterns

ALL KINDS OF THEM, FROM THE SMALLEST TO THE BIGGEST

MAGIC LANTERN. Contains six slides. Has little oil lamp. Only.... .. **.19**

MAGIC LANTERN. Tubular shape. One dozen slides . .. . **.98**

MAGIC LANTERN. A very good one. Oil lamp; good lens; one dozen slides **1.50**

MAGIC LANTERN. It is a thing for a boy or girl. Throws a splendid picture. Lamp has glass globe; good lens, twelve slides.

1.75 and 2.25

MAGIC LANTERN Throws very nice pictures. Triple lens; oil lamp, with glass chimney; one dozen slides **2.50**

MAGIC LANTERN. A good big one for the money. Oil lamp. Glass globe; good reflector; triple lens; throws a fair sized picture. With one dozen slides..... **2.45**

MAGIC LANTERN. Globular lamp; has glass smoke stack; triple lens An ingenious arrangement for holding the slides. A very unique affair. With a dozen slides.. . . **2.75**

MAGIC LANTERN Just the thing for home entertainment. Good size. Has smoke stack, oil lamp with glass globe, good reflector, triple lens. Throws quite a large picture. It's the kind that has been selling for $5. Our price is **3.50**

MAGIC LANTERN. Here's one that throws an unusually large picture. Has large oil lamp, with glass tube and screen covered smoke stack. Has triple lens, telescopic tube and is equipped with a dozen slides. Price **4.48**

WE ALSO HAVE MAGIC LANTERNS RUNNING UP TO $12 50 At this price it is an uncommonly large and effective lantern that is suitable for large evening entertainments.

Ad for Lit Brothers store offering magic lanterns for Christmas at a wide range of prices. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 19, 1901.

California's Greatest Toy Shop.

30,000 square feet of space given over for the show and sale of Toys, to say nothing of the storeroom upstairs and the workshops in the basement; 500 employes for the Toy Department alone. To see the great toy display is a treat that the little ones ought not to miss—a treat that comes but once a year. Don't let the opportunity to enjoy it slip away from them. These are some of the prices, and each one of them "Money saved":

Trumpets—With porcelain mouth piece.....1c to $1.00
Trombones, 10c to $1.75; **Cornets**, 10c to $1.50
Violins—With bow and resin.....25c, 50c, $1.00, $1.50
Banjos or Mandolins.....25c and 50c
Rubber Dol's and Animals.....10c to $1.50
Magic Lanterns—With views.....50c to $35.00
Moving Picture Lanterns (Cinegraph)—With films, operated as easily as the magic lantern, shown this season for the first time...$5.00, $10.00, $15.00, $22.50
Dishes—Handsomely decorated tea sets, of china.....10c, 25c, 50c up to $11.00
Dinner and Tea Set—In pretty basket.....$1.25 to $6.00
Britannia Tea Set.....25c, 50c, $1.00
Magnetic Toys—With strong magnet.....5c to $2.50
Food on Plate—A novelty that will please any little housekeeper, per box, assorted.....25c to $1.50
Musical Tin Tops.....10c to $1.00
Wagons—Iron, 95c to $4.00; wood, 35c to $12.50
Police Patrol Wagons....$5.00, $7.00, $10.50
Hook and Ladders.....85c, $2.50 to $12.50
Hose Cart—With hose.....$15.00
Buckboards, $1.75, $3.50, $5.00, $6.00, $8.00
Handy Pedal Wagon.....$3.75, $5.00; rubber tires, $6.25
Velocipede—Plain tire.....$1.75 to $3.50
Velocipedes.....$3.50 to $7.00
Tricycle—Plain tires.....$4.50 to $8.50
Tricycle—Rubber tires.....$7.50 to $12.50
Wood Rocking Horses.....$1.00 to $7.50
Rocking Horses—Skin covered.....$3.00 to $14.00
Swinging Rocking Horses—Wood.....$2.50 to $12.50
Swinging Rocking Horses—Skin covered.....$10.00 to $13.00
Mechanical Toys—Bucking Donkeys, 50c; Engines, Chimes, Butterflies, etc.....25c
Dogs, Cats, Chickens, Ducks, Jockeys, Bicycle Riders, etc.....50c
Musical Negro, Bicycle Tandem Rider, Monkeys, etc.....75c

San Francisco Call, December 2, 1900

Now Open

Our full line of Xmas Goods for 1899. In this line you will find a large assortment of useful medium-priced goods, selected with great care, with a wide range of prices in each department. It would be impossible for us to describe each line, so we invite you to call and inspect them for yourself. We advise early buying; the result will please you.

Steam Engines . . .
Complete Mechanical Toys at.....65c, $1.00, $1.75 and $2.50
Magic Lanterns . . . All complete with slides.....$1.00
Celluloid Goods . . .in all the new and up-to-date styles and colors.
Toy Dishes . . . Dishes.....10c Fine China.....25c Also sets in tin and granite.
Tool Chest . . . Like this.....60c
Fine Neckwear and Handkerchiefs Just let us show you this line; it's a cure for sore eyes.
Dressed Dolls . . This beauty at - - 49c Others at 75c, $1.00, $1.25, to $5.00.
Purses . . to fit your pile.
Candy . . Get our prices.
Celluloid Albums . . ..7 by 9, holding 24 pictures, only.....29c We have 20 other styles.
Mirrors Mirrors Mirrors Mirrors
Toy Trains . . . Iron Trains.....9c Others at.....25c to $1.95
Queensware . . . . When visiting our store don't fail to look over the line of Salad Dishes, Cracker Jars, Vases, Water Sets, Fruits, Fancy Plates, Mugs, Cups and Saucers, Etc., Etc.
Doll Carriages . . This one only.....19c Carts and Cabs from.....25c to $3.00
Children's Books . . All kinds; all prices.
Doll Trunks . . with lock and key, only 35c
For all sizes of boys. Drums, 25¢ to $1.50
Shoo-Flys . . . Like this one.....25c

Our line consists of new goods bought for this season--nothing carried over--and we mean to maintain our past reputation of being . . . . .
THE CHEAPEST PLACE IN TOWN.

THE "BEE HIVE"
McCOOK, NEB.
COLSON & THRONE, Proprietors

McCook Tribune, December 9, 1899

MORNING, DECEMBER 10, 1895.

X-MAS IS APPROACH

And will soon be here. As usual, we are on hand with our Annual Gifts to the Boys, and, as usual, they are superior to all others.

With a Boy's Suit or Overcoat we give you your choice of Three Elegant Presents: A solid Wagon, with metal body and steel axles; a fully equipped Magic Lantern, with twelve slides, or a splendid small, medium or large size Gun.

BOYS' SUITS,

With Knee Pants, sizes 4 to 15 years, single and double breasted, Cheviots, Cassimeres and Homespuns, strongly made, double seats and knees, at $2, $2.50, $3, $4 and $5.

COMBINATION SUITS,

In double breasted Blue, Black, Gray and Brown, plain and checked, all wool Cheviots, extra pants and Cap to match, at $5, $5.50 and $6.

BOYS' LONG PANTS SUITS,

Sizes 12 to 19 years, in Frocks and single and double breasted Sacks, at $4, $5, $6 and $7.50.

BOYS' OVERCOATS,

In Ulsters and Cape Coats, sizes 3 to 19 years, at $2, $2.50, $3, $4, $5 and $6.

MEN'S SUITS

In endless variety and styles, from the working suit to the full dress, in all textures. The suit that others sell at $8 to $9 we sell at $5, and our Suits at $7.50, $9, $10, $12.50, $15 and $20 can't be bought elsewhere for 25 per cent. more than our price.

MEN'S OVERCOATS,

All sizes, all shades and all styles, Meltons, Kerseys, Box Cloths, Chinchillas and Clay Worsteds, at $5, $7, $9, $11, $15 and $20.

L. M. JONES & CO.

Houston Daily Post, December 10, 1895

Every Toy Is Fresh From the Factory

Brightly painted, new toys give more real lasting satisfaction and pleasure. New toys wear longer and stand hard usage in a way that "holdovers" will not. You will find every toy in our immense stock resplendent in snowy coating that is not rubbed, nicked or stained.

49c for 64c Easy Jointed Doll.
1.00 for 1.39 D. F. Dressed Doll.
2.95 for 3.79 Indestructible Washable Doll, large size.
7.00 for 8.00 Dressed Doll, very handsome.
4.35 for 5.74 Majestic Jointed Doll.

Large Toys, Fourth Floor. Small Toys, Third Floor.

15c for 25c Christmas Tree Ornaments.
39c for 54c Wood Kitchens 4 p. c. Dresser Chairs, complete
1.00 for 1.34 Magic Lanterns.

New York *Evening World*, December 9, 1904

A Magic Lantern for a Dozen Laying Hens

Kentwood D. Wells
451 Middle Turnpike
Storrs, CT 06268
kentwood.wells@uconn.edu

In the course of researching ads for toy magic lanterns in American newspapers, I came across many ads offering magic lanterns in exchange for other goods, or various kinds of goods in exchange for receiving a magic lantern. It appears that almost any kind of merchandise could be exchanged for a magic lantern, and a selection of these ads appears below. I don't know why this sort of exchange was especially common in Philadelphia.

Marcy magic lantern. Perfect outfit to travel with, also suitable for schools or lodges, will make a 16 ft. picture, with case and over 200 all kinds of expensive pictures for sale or trade for a full-sized harp. Shawano, Wisconsin.—Chicago *Daily Inter Ocean*, March 25, 1896.

Wanted to trade, an $85 imported magic lantern in good condition for 1 dozen Leghorn or other good laying hens.—*Omaha World Herald*, May 15, 1901.

For exchange, Richland Station, Pennsylvania: $25.00—good as new, magic lantern for small printing outfit, combination tandem, or what's offered equally.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16, 1902.

For exchange: New skiff and large magic lantern with slides for typewriter. C. T. Emons, Columbia, Pennsylvania.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16, 1902.

For exchange: Graphophone, records and horns, magic lantern and slides in exchange for camera, phonograph or bicycle. C. M. Jones—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 9, 1902.

For exchange: Juvenile bicycle and magic lantern for printing press.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 9, 1902.

Desire to exchange 4 volumes of Encyclopedia Dictionaries for a gentle-speaking healthy parrot, with cage. These volumes weigh over 30 pounds and are almost new. Have also a good magic lantern, with 42 good views, and other things to exchange. Francis H. Osbourne, Seven Pines, Virginia—*Richmond Times*, March 22, 1902.

For exchange: Magic lantern and views, cost $35, will exchange for $13 cash or coal and groceries.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 20, 1902.

Exchange new no. 1 folding pocket Kodak; also fine flute; want bicycle for small boy, magic lantern or trombone.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1902.

Half-horse power engine and a large magic lantern, fit for entertainment use, to exchange for printed material.—*Trenton Evening Times*, February 22, 1903.

Will trade carpenter's tools and large toy magic lantern for iron beds, cook-stove, chairs, metal folding bed.—Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*, January 3, 1904.

For exchange: A copy of "Decameron" and of Balzac's Droll Stories in exchange for a camera, magic lantern, or offers.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 1904.

Shotgun, magic lantern, oil stove, typewriter for camera, phonograph, oven for gas stove, wool blanket, overcoat.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 25, 1904.

A large magic lantern and over 70 views, 3X4 inches, colored and complete, some moving; want high grade chainless bicycle, coaster.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 9, 1905.

Exchange large magic lantern, 250 different views, 3 stamp books, or what have you in exchange?—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 10, 1905.

A stereopticon—Prof. Lubin with acetylene generator, 8 tip burner, reflector and stand, good as new, value $35; will exchange for plate camera and outfit, must be first class, or best offer.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 1905.

What is offered for a child's large magic lantern, a new gas bag, a lineman's suit and safety straps, a small gas radiator, a wire Baldwin couch and 12 electric batteries?—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 1905.

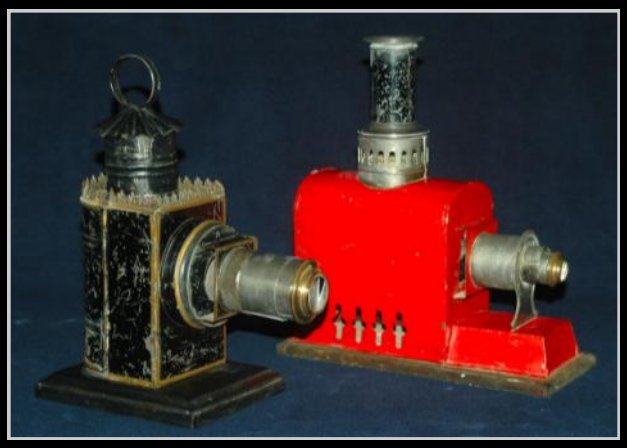
Will trade restaurant meals for large phonograph and large coal burning magic lantern.—Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*, July 1, 1906.

Will exchange $10 piccolo for large-sized magic lantern, in good condition.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 16, 1908.

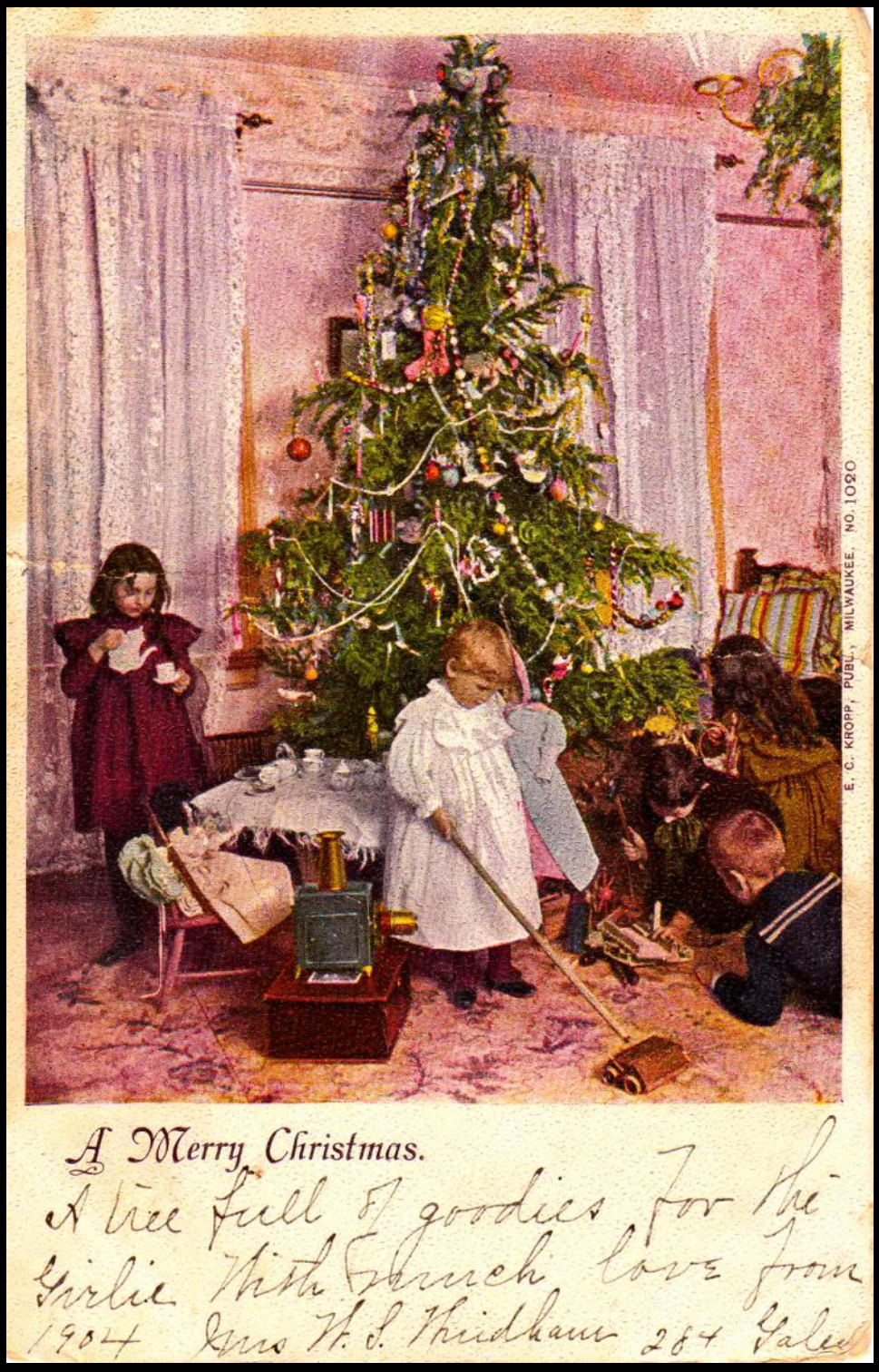
Sleigh for pony in fine condition; also bells and food warmer, magic lantern, nearly new, standard size, fine Christmas gift for a boy, man's English saddle and bridle, good condition.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 13, 1908.

Fine magic lantern, 400 slides, fine scenery, for building lot near shore; exchange paperhanging for willow plume, or what have you?—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 10, 1910.

Exchange post card projector, new, double lens, two gas burners, with mantel, tubing, for good magic lantern and some slides.—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 8, 1911.



German toy magic lanterns, clockwise from upper left: Two lanterns by Jean Schoenner; two all-brass lanterns by Max Dannhorn; "Young America" magic lantern by "G. F."; two red lanterns by Ernst Plank; two barrel-shaped lanterns, probably by Ernst Plank. Wells collection.



Postcard from 1904 showing a German-made toy magic lantern under a Christmas tree. Toy magic lanterns were sold primarily as Christmas gifts for boys. The peak in the number of advertisements in American newspapers for toy magic lanterns was in 1904-1905. Wells collection.

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